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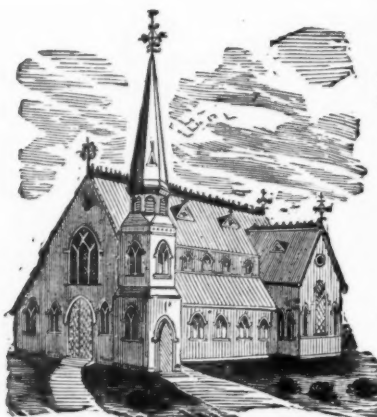
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The Congregational Review.

OCTOBER, 1887.

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ENGLAND UNDER VICTORIA.

WE dealt in a recent number with that conflict between faith and unbelief which has resulted from the intellectual movements, and especially from the scientific discoveries of the Victorian era. The object of our present article is to consider the changes which have been wrought in the Churches, and which are, to a large extent, the effect of the same causes which have produced an acute stage in their struggle with unbelief. It would be absurd to expect that Churches living in the midst of influences so subtle, so active, and so widely diffused, should remain entirely unaffected by them. Here and there individuals, or possibly even sections of the Church, may seek to oppose an obstinate resistance to the progressive tendencies of the day, but these are exceptions, and it is doubtful whether such success as they achieve is a decided gain. Those who regard the age as wholly given up to evil, and make it their boast that they, at least, have escaped its contamination, are not likely to exert any power over it. Dwelling amid the ideas and traditions of the past, they can have no sympathy—in truth, they boast that they can have no sympathy—with the present, and without sympathy they can neither have understanding of its needs, nor capacity to meet them. They may prophesy against the evils around them, but they produce no impression, because of their failure rightly to appreciate that which they condemn. They are, after all, the few. The vast majority of Christian men are, more or less, in touch with the spirit of the age. How could it be other-

wise? They cannot place themselves so far apart from the world in which they live as to be wholly insensible to its influence. Its voices are ever ringing in their ears, its forces are around them on every side. They read the publications, they take part in the discussions of the day; they meet with all varieties of opinion, and have to deal with them; they are confronted with the great problems which critical research or scientific discovery have started, and they cannot put them aside as matters of trivial importance. There are atmospheric conditions which possibly have even more power than these more direct influences. On every side we hear complaints of general unrest. It is the characteristic of the atmosphere of the day, and it is difficult for any man wholly to escape from its effect. The Churches everywhere have felt it, and it has told both for good and for evil. Both in creed and practice there have been very conspicuous changes since the beginning of the reign. The process by which they have been accomplished has been one both of loss and of gain, and it is not wonderful that there should be considerable diversity of opinion as to the general result. In our judgment it is not necessary to be strongly optimist to pronounce a favourable verdict.

I. The age is distinguished by an increasing desire for more reality in religious thought and life. Churches, like individuals, may have—are pretty sure to have—a false, that is, an unreal—life as well as a true one. Ruskin very wisely says:—

It is indeed but one of the conditions of death or stupor, but it acts, even when it cannot be said to animate, and is not always easily known from the true. It is that life of custom and accident in which many of us pass much of our time in the world; that life in which we do what we have not purposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is moulded by them instead of assimilating them; that life, instead of growing and blossoming under any wholesome dew, is crystallized over with it as with hoar frost, and becomes to the true life what an arborescence is to a tree, a candied agglomeration of thoughts and habits foreign to it, brittle, obstinate, and icy, which can neither break nor grow, but must be crushed and broken to bits if it

stand in our way. All men—(why should we not say all Churches?)—are liable to be in some degree frost-bitten in this sort; all are partly encumbered and crusted over with idle matter; only, if they have real life in them, they are always breaking the bark away in noble rents, until it becomes, like the black stripe upon the birch tree, only a witness of their own inward strength.

This is surely a description as true as it is eloquent of what has been going on in our Churches. The process cannot fail to be alarming and disquieting to a large number of minds, unable to discriminate between the Divine truth and the human additions by which it has been overlaid. Creeds and forms are all, to some extent, the production of the age in which they are born. They express its conclusions, they reflect its spirit, they meet its need. But one generation passes away, and another comes with its own ideas to be interpreted and its own longings to be satisfied. Its field of knowledge is enlarged, the conditions under which it lives are changed, its experiences are entirely its own; and to hold it bound up in the traditions and precedents of the past is to cramp its energy and to threaten even its life. But emancipation from these restraints involves the sacrifice of so much to which men have become attached from habit or association, that it is not surprising if they mistake what is really an outburst of young and vigorous life, which cannot and ought not to be repressed, for a mere work of destruction. It offends the conservative instincts, which are nowhere stronger than when they are sanctified by some real or supposed religious association. Few things are more curious than to see how all the cant arguments and praises which Toryism has been accustomed to employ in defence of some standing injustice or obsolete institution, which, though at one time a source of good, has long since become an anachronism and even a positive evil, are continually brought out in support of some well-worn theological formulæ or venerable Church custom. "The old has worked well enough; why should it be disturbed?" "The change now proposed may be a small matter, but who can tell to what it may lead?" "The thin end of the wedge." "What satisfied our fathers may surely content us." "Our

objections are not so much to the particular change, as to the spirit in which it is advocated, and the tendency of its supporters." How often have we heard these and a number of other arguments of similar character urged in opposition to changes which, had they been considered on behalf of their merits, would have commended themselves to candid and independent minds. To break through the crust of traditions and prejudices by which religious thought and action have been overlaid until they have been well-nigh destroyed is no easy task, especially in view of the jealous apprehensions of those who suspect men who are honestly seeking to get back to the simplicity that is in Jesus, of being at heart enemies of the gospel. That there are some who have hostile intents, and whose attack upon these accidents of Christianity is aimed against its essential truth, is not to be questioned, but the defenders are only aiding them in the accomplishment of their purpose, when they identify the Divine truth with its human forms of expression, or confound vital principles with doctrines which at most are only inferences from them, or even with institutions which have grown up out of them, and insist that the weakening of the one must ultimately result in the destruction of the other. Happily the necessity for discrimination has come to be more generally recognized. The growing desire for reality, the impatience of the misrepresentation and even travesty of the gospel by which its true character has been hidden, the determination to go behind even the most honoured and venerable creeds and formularies and get to the truth itself, the refusal to bow down to mere idols of authority, are among the best and most characteristic features of the time. There is much yet to be done in the same direction, but it is surprising how many prejudices, which at one time seemed to be invincible, have been overcome, how much the true scientific spirit has affected theology, how many traditions which fettered the liberty and hindered the work of the church, have passed away.

II. The theology of the times is of a more distinctly Evangelical character. We use the term not in its technical

but in its true sense. In the teaching of the time there is a fuller exhibition of the gospel.

It is not possible in the space at our disposal to deal with all the phases of theological opinion during the last fifty years, but he must be a singularly unobservant man who is insensible to the very marked change in the general tone of religious teaching. Assailants of the faith are fond of attacking certain aspects of the Divine character, which were only too frequent in the discourses of the early part of the century; but the criticisms which might have been effective then are pointless now. It may be that the reaction which has set in is so extreme as to have in it some elements of considerable danger; but its reality, at all events, is not to be questioned, and it is as little open to doubt that in many aspects it has been of a very salutary character. For its excesses we have no apology to offer. If, in the recoil from the sterner teaching of the past, it has been forgotten that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man, even as His love is manifest to all sinners, the result must be an imperfect presentation of the gospel itself. If in any way there has been a weakening of the authority of God's righteousness, and as a consequence an abatement of the sense of the enormity of sin, nothing could be more disastrous in its effects both on creed and character. For if sin be not the abominable thing which God hates, and if that hatred be not a thing to be dreaded by every human soul; or, to put it in another form, if sin be only a weakness to be regretted, a misfortune, if possible to be avoided, but yet not involving serious guilt or entailing any grave consequences, only a frailty incident to humanity on which God cannot and will not be severe; and if, in truth, God is simply infinite benevolence, the need for the work of Christ ceases, and the gospel becomes an unmeaning proclamation of forgiveness when there is no sin to forgive. But all this is the exaggeration to which all great movements are liable. It is necessary to expose its real character, and none should be more anxious to do this than those who are seeking to develop more fully

that idea of the Divine Fatherhood, which, to say the least, was so imperfectly set forth in the theology of the last generation, and which is the starting-point of the best theology of the present. Those who are most possessed by its spirit, who realize most the imperative obligation which rests upon those by whom this truth is most valued of making it known to all, are of all others most concerned in guarding it against perversions and misrepresentation which would find in it only a note of anarchy and of license. No one has better expressed the spirit of the new theology than Archbishop Trench in those expressive lines—

Let all men count it true that love,
Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
And that in it we live and move.

It is surely a gain, and a gain of the very highest kind, that we have been brought thus to understand what is so clearly written in the New Testament, but has been so imperfectly understood by the Church, that the kingdom of God is the rule of love. It is a mere caricature of the truth so to insist on the love as to get rid of the idea of rule altogether. There is no rule so real, so penetrating, so omnipotent as that of love. Instead of making light of sin, a right view of the Divine love must rather intensify the sense of its enormity. Assuredly the teacher to whom perhaps, more than any other, the age is indebted for the clear presentation of this fundamental idea of the gospel, would have been one of the last to accept that feeble sentimentalism, which some would palm off upon the world as the gospel of the Fatherhood. Frederick Maurice preached with a clearness and a persistency which none have surpassed on the gospel of the kingdom. The King was the Father, and His rule is love; but Maurice never failed to press home to the conscience the question put through the old prophet: "If I be a father where is my fear?" We are not among his followers, and, indeed, have many serious objections to some of the most important points in his teaching, but we gratefully recognize the force with which he has insisted on the demands of the Divine

righteousness, even when setting forth the reality of the Divine Fatherhood.

It would be quite possible for any one desirous to put what he might consider the truer though not less pleasant view of our present position, to point to some departures from the faith, to insist that there is a growing laxity of theological opinion, and to quote a large amount of evidence in support of his contention, to deplore the unrest which is abroad, and indulge in the most lugubrious forecasts as to the result upon the faith of the Church. Nothing could be more unwise on the part of leaders in the Church, than for them to close their eyes to such evils, but nothing could be more fatuous than to exaggerate their magnitude, or suffer them to weigh so heavily upon our spirit as to paralyze our energies. We are living in a period of movement which must of necessity have its own difficulties, but the difficulties which awake the fears of the faithless only inspire the resolution and call forth the energy of strong men. It is high time that instead of dwelling upon discouragements we should look on the brighter side of things. We cannot turn the tide of progress even if we would — we, at least, would not if we could. It would surely be wiser for us, instead of railing against the inevitable, or attempting the impossible, to see if even the things which on a superficial glance may seem to be adverse may not turn to the furtherance of the gospel. It is hard to understand how any one who has a deep-rooted faith in the living Christ, and the truth as it is in Him, can be haunted by doubts as to the effect of increased mental activity and extended knowledge. What is to be dreaded most is intellectual sloth and stagnation and ignorance. These are the real foes of spiritual progress, the instruments by which superstition and worldliness enslave the spirit of man and repress all lofty aspiration and noble effort.

III. The religion of the day is brighter in its tone and more practical in its work.

If, indeed, forgetting for a time our favourite shibboleths, the systems under which we have found a resting-place, and

to which we have become so attached that we necessarily exaggerate their intrinsic importance, the ideas and practices which are so intimately associated in our mind with the religious life that we can hardly conceive of religion without them, and looking away from them to the wider interests of Christian truth, can we hesitate to say that there has been very decided advance, for which we have to render hearty and unfeigned thanks to Him who, despite our faithless fears, has been guiding the course of His Church by ways which we are unable perfectly to understand? It would need some hardihood for the most pessimist of pessimists to say that the religious life of England is weaker to-day than it was half a century ago. Doubtless it is more disturbed and agitated, but even in all the turmoil and excitement which so sorely distress many minds there is a straining after a loftier ideal, which surely has in it incalculable elements of good. Even those who question the soundness of their present position and are calling out for novelties in method if not in principle, are not all under the dominion of a sceptical temper, especially not of a scepticism in which there is hostility to the gospel. There may be dissatisfaction with the results which are secured, and a conviction that where the result is so unsatisfactory there must be some fault in the work, but this does not imply unbelief except in the established plans and usages of the Church. That discontent often expresses itself with rudeness and severity, and probably many of the remedies which it suggests are open to grave exception, but the men who propose them err from excess of zeal or deficiency of knowledge, certainly not from lack of spiritual sympathy or want of faith in the Christ. Some of them dislike all organization, and in their revolt from it would insist on a freedom which is little short of anarchy. Others are impatient of what they regard as ascetic restraints, contrary to the genius of the New Testament, and unnecessary for spiritual discipline, and in the desire to make their protest emphatic and get rid of a conception of the Christian life which they hold to have been a serious hindrance to the spread of the heavenly kingdom, they may

have propounded theories of Christian liberty which, taken in their bald and unqualified form, have in them germs of grave error; and carrying these theories into practice, may adopt a line of conduct which the fathers would have condemned as worldly conformity, and in which we may see a grave peril to godliness. Or, looking at points of doctrine, there are those who, dissatisfied with popular theories about the Atonement, and especially offended by hard modes of presentation which have cared for nothing but strict logical consistency, and are absolutely without a touch of that Divine mysticism apart from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to enter into the heart of that foundation truth, have talked loosely, wildly, even dangerously.

But, granting all this, is it to be assumed that all who have fallen into any of these errors are enemies of the truth, and that the one duty of Christian men and Churches is to repress them? That some of them may often make themselves intolerable, particularly when, without any special modes of extraordinary spiritual insight, and certainly without the fruits of long experience, they assume an air of superior wisdom and talk with an authority to which even Christian sages should not pretend, is not to be denied. The dogmatism of men of years and wisdom is sure to provoke resistance, but the arrogant pretensions to infallibility on the part of mere tyros naturally excites contemptuous indignation. Still, it is not wise to act upon this feeling, however reasonable it may be, and it betrays us into gross injustice when it blinds us to what is true and good even in those whose assumptions we feel constrained to oppose. Men may be mistaken who are nevertheless right at heart, and this, however obvious it may seem, is a point which many are only too prone to forget when judging the representatives of opinions and tendencies which to them are extremely obnoxious. It is very hard to separate between principles and the results to which they lead, and it is only too common a fault in controversy for the combatants to make each other responsible for the most advanced conclusions to which their principles might be pushed by an adversary, even though they may themselves

disavow any sympathy with them. It is to be deprecated everywhere, for its only effect is to exasperate, not to convince. In our late political controversy it has been very conspicuous, and the effect has been very mischievous. In the election of 1885 prominent defenders of the Church of the Sir Robert Fowler type insisted that Dissent was not to be distinguished from Atheism, and in that of 1886 every supporter of Mr. Gladstone was denounced and is denounced still as a Separatist. What advantage was to be gained by attributing to men opinions and designs which they distinctly repudiate, except a temporary political gain in the unfair prejudice against opponents' credit in ignorant minds, is not apparent. Such unfair representations are bad enough in political, but they are infinitely worse when transferred to religious, controversy. Here surely the supreme concern should be to understand the real motives and aims of men; to estimate the spirit of their teaching instead of looking too exclusively and too rigidly at its letter; to judge them by their own avowals, not by our deductions from them, however logical these may be. If the principles be faithfully carried out, the anxieties which trouble so many will be less keenly felt, for they will come to understand that there may be a soul of good even in what they have been too ready to regard as wholly evil; and that some, whom they have been too ready to accuse of heresy or unbelief, are, despite all their follies and mistakes, loyal at heart and seeking after the truth.

He surely must look at everything with a jaundiced eye who cannot find much to encourage trust and hope in the Christianity of to-day. Suppose that its theology is defective, and in some respects even lax and uncertain, yet is there not about it a sweetness, a brightness, a cheerfulness, which were sadly wanting in that of our earlier days? The religion of the Evangelical revival, even in its best times, was sombre and severe. With all its great merits, it did not succeed in bringing out the more joyous aspects of Christian life. It was for ever engaged in a serious work of introspection, which had a tendency to disturb the calm trust of the soul.

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His or am I not ?

was the frequent cry of its solitary musings. Under it men were troubled by theological perplexities, and tangled problems of personal spiritual experience; and, in truth, the purer the souls the more trying the agonies through which they had to pass. How little does one meet to-day of the experience with which one was familiar enough in the earlier period even of our own ministry. Memory looks back to devout and saintly spirits whose religion seemed to yield but very occasional gleams of happiness. They were always longing to read their title clear, but their hearts were so full of care, and their eyes of tears, that they could not discern the letters. Possibly we have passed into the opposite extreme. We can hardly too often repeat that the swing of the pendulum after this fashion is in harmony with a law to which there are few exceptions. It may be that there is too much indifference as to points which our fathers held of supreme importance; that too much of what passes as Christian experience is miserably superficial; that many are too ready to fancy themselves rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, whereas they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. But, recognizing to the fullest extent this danger, it must be said that the difference between the spiritual experience of the Christians of to-day and those of the past generation may, to some extent, be traced to the changed spirit of the theology, and that the change is for the better rather than the worse. Unconsciously, as the result of various influences by a process we should find it hard to analyse or explain, we have got other thoughts of God. He is our Father, full of tenderness to us in the midst of our weakness and error, not merely a righteous king and judge who cannot tolerate the slightest deflection from the path of truth and duty. We have still a humbling consciousness that, far as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. But in

that there is only consolation, for to us it is the assurance, that when our imagination has taken its boldest flights in its endeavour to conceive of the love of God, it has left us far below the wondrous reality. In grasping a thought like this, we are introduced to the glorious liberty of the children of God; we are not burdened with the fear that some mistake as to some point of doctrine may be our ruin; life is not spent in perpetual terror, lest by the neglect of some duty, or the transgression of some precept, even though it belong to the infinitely little, we should forfeit the favour of our God. We rejoice rather in the thought that His love is ever seeking after us, waiting to raise us when we fall, to hold us up lest we stumble, to recover us when we wander. That religion must be full of brightness which has learned to trust with the perfect abandon of a child, whose one hope is in the unfailing grace of the Father, whose one joy is to walk in the sunlight of His love.

On another side this theology has been equally happy in its influence. Religion was never more active, more anxious to make its practical power felt in the salvation of men. As we have risen to a higher appreciation of the Fatherhood of God, so have we learned to realize more practically the brotherhood of man, and to feel that we can best serve God by a diligent and loving ministry to man. The clerical and ecclesiastical idea of religion is on the wane, and instead of it men are learning to think more of the great works of Christian sympathy and benevolence. "By clericalism," says Canon Fremantle, who has entered a vigorous protest against it, whose power is sadly marred by its exaggeration and one-sidedness, but in which there is nevertheless a great element of truth, "I understand the system which unduly exalts the clerical office and the functions of public worship, so as to draw away the sense of Divine agency and appointment from other offices and other functions." So long as the movement is confined within these lines, it is not only good but necessary. The tendency to regard attendance on public worship and acts of a cognate character as constituting the sum of religious duty, is so

strong that it is ever necessary to insist that they are helps to religion, but they are not always themselves religion, still less are they the whole of religion. They are invaluable for the nourishment of the spiritual life, but that life has many forms of manifestation, and many fields of activity. The practical godliness, which is the natural consequence of a clear perception of this fact, is one of the most healthy and encouraging signs in our religious life of to-day.

There are not a few who seem unable to understand the working of the new spirit, and who consequently are disquieted by changes which are really due to causes in which they should find reason for hope. We are frequently told of the decline of week-evening services, and very unpleasant contrasts are drawn between the past and the present in this particular. It is forgotten that the Church of the former period knew nothing of a number of institutions for carrying on the true work of Christianity which have sprung up in our time, and which tax the energies of the Churches in a way of which our fathers had no conception. A melancholy thing is it for any Church if it has lost the spirit of prayer. But it is rash and uncharitable to conclude that this is so because of diminished attendance at week evening meetings, if that be due to the increased attention to practical Christian work. It may be, indeed, that these are those who undervalue the benefits to be derived from the ministries of the sanctuary, and were such a view to spread extensively the injury must be serious. But even that might probably prove to be less in the ultimate results than the self-complacent Pharisaism which fancied that it had discharged its duty to God when it had put in an appearance, with more or less regularity, at church or chapel.

There has been an outburst of practical Christian zeal in these later days which has received but scant recognition from various classes of thinkers, whose only point of agreement is a common desire to depreciate the religion of the times. On every side we hear that the times are out of joint. It would be distressing enough had we not heard

the lamentation so often before. Still there is quite enough in the state of the world in which we live, and of which we are part, to rouse our courage and call forth the exercise of holy ingenuity. Vice stalks abroad amongst us, and is hardly rebuked. At one end of society we have an extravagance, luxury, and pleasure-seeking which, on the showing of *The Saturday Review*—a witness not likely to take too unfriendly a view—is sapping the chivalry and manhood of the nation; while at the other there is a poverty which too often becomes reckless in its despair, and blasphemous in its defiance both of God and man. But amid all this there is a Christianity, which, for its intense desire to serve God by seeking to grapple with these evils has no parallel in former days. It has its defects, but at least it has a breadth of sympathy, a freedom from conventional ideas, a spirit of genial tolerance, an endeavour to follow in the footsteps of the Master “who came to seek and to save that which was lost.” All lovers of God and man should rejoice. If we have less of formal theology there is more of religion, and through the teaching of this practical godliness we may be led into a theology more perfect, in which will be presented more of the true will of God than in that which has passed away.

FUTURE RETRIBUTION.*

THIS book will sustain the reputation which Prebendary Row has for calm and patient investigation into Scripture truth, and for sound reasoning. He has here to handle a subject of great perplexity, and in the overthrow of old theories he shows that power of cumulating arguments which has already stood him in good stead in apologetic literature. We may say at once that the book is stronger

* *Future Retribution viewed in the light of Reason and Revelation.*
By C. A. Row, M.A. London: William Isbister (Limited), 56, Ludgate Hill.

on its destructive than on its constructive side. Probably this arises in a large measure from the nature of the subject, and from the conviction which the author has that popular conceptions need to be decisively dealt with and exposed. If we demand something more than this, it is only because the author shows a clear capacity for doing better. His book is so good that we desire the best he has to give, and that best would have shown itself by a more earnest intellectual endeavour to point out what the Scriptures do mean, rather than what they do not mean. In dealing with popular theological notions it is common and easy to take the most pronounced and exaggerated forms into which they are thrown, and by a ready process to show that they are untenable. Thus Unitarians, who argue against all atonement, often dwell at great length on the mercantile theory, show its inconsistencies, and then deduce the conclusion that vicarious sacrifice cannot be received. A similar tendency is traceable in this, as in many other very able treatises. The statements as to eternal torment, which have often done duty on similar occasions, are again presented in all their moral ugliness. But a more philosophical method suggests that we should try to get at the truths which underlie these popular conceptions; and, though the process is a more difficult one, yet it would yield more enduring fruits to modern thought. The expressions about a material hell belong rather to mediæval than to modern thinking, but there is a conception of justice which lies at the back of all popular phraseology which needs to be scrutinized with great care before we dismiss any thoughts on this terrible theme as unworthy of our consideration. That the results of moral actions are operative as long as the moral agent exists seems to be an established truth, and it is possible that popular theories have hitherto been the main expressions of this great principle. If so, it will certainly not help us to dismiss crude and general terms from our minds as though they were unworthy of our consideration. They may possibly contain within them the very germs of Scripture truth which a thoughtful expositor would be only too thankful to seize.

We are confirmed in this impression made by the first chapter when we turn to the last and find the reader shut up to the conclusion that God has only two alternatives before Him—either the conversion or the destruction of the sinner. The necessity for this alternative is built up upon the phrase that God will be “all in all.” In other words, God is to be supreme when men have either submitted to His Son or have been utterly extinguished. But it may be asked whether God is not all in all now in a very true and large sense? He is certainly supreme; for the principles of His righteousness are the governing forces of His universe. The existence of evil is the crux of all our finite thought. It does not, however, at the present moment interfere with God’s supremacy, because the forces of evil are at any given point of history weaker than those of good. And we may therefore conclude that, even if the alternative suggested be not the outcome of the future, yet that in ways we cannot foresee God will be all in all. It is possible, therefore, that the popular theory, if it had been philosophically examined, would have been found to have contained within it one of the main principles on which future retribution will be administered.

While we say this, we also believe that the time has fully come for a serious exegesis of the Scriptures, in order that we may learn what, first of all, they do not teach. But, before this could be effectually done, it was necessary to consider what principles of interpretation were to be adopted. A reasonable view of inspiration had to be laid down. This would take note of the Eastern, and necessarily highly figurative, character of much of the Scripture language, and still more of the varied and growing value which is to be put on the moral teaching of the Bible. All its doctrines are not of equal value, and the differences have to be tested by a regard to the circumstances under which each book was first written. It is in this respect that we find in this treatise the marks of a clear advance upon many of the efforts of the past. So long as we are under the illusion that Genesis is of equal value as our moral guide with the Epistles of St. Paul, we certainly find

our progress blocked. The various portions have to be weighed over against one another in a very careful manner before general conclusions can be arrived at. In reference to human responsibility this has been boldly and carefully done by Prebendary Row as far as the Old Testament is concerned, and he lays down this great principle, viz., "that there are precepts in the Old Testament which do not realize the ideal of the attributes of justice and holiness as they exist in God, or as they are affirmed by the enlightened moral sense and conscience of man." It will be seen at once that this plays havoc with the old theory of verbal inspiration or with any approach to that theory; and, with great fearlessness, the "Thus saith the Lord" of the Old Testament is regarded as the mistaken but inevitable confusion of secondary with primary causes. The Old Testament habit was to regard all existing facts as actually brought about by God's intervention, and to disregard human and fallible agency. As a moral guide, therefore, these Scriptures are to be read only in the light of the clearer teaching of Christ and His apostles.

If we ask the natural question as to why this sifting is to stop at the last verse of Malachi, our author would probably answer that in as far as the New Testament contains the utterances of the Incarnate Word, we are to receive those utterances as final. But with regard to one particular line which the writers of the New Testament have taken, he applies the same principle, and says (p. 307) "that not only the Apostolic Church, but the apostles themselves, were in error when they thought that the coming of Christ in visible glory was an event which would take place at no distant period of time." We are not denying the truth of this canon of interpretation, but we wish to suggest that it is far wider in its application than is here conceived.

This seems to be Mr. Row's conviction when dealing with the terminology of the New Testament. He is in favour of bringing mere outward and human tests to find out how the terms employed must have been understood by the readers of these Scriptures. But he might have gone on to inquire how far the mental habits of the writers

coloured the revelation which they received. If there were limitations in the popular mind, might there not have been limitations in the apostolic mind? In fact, we are convinced that no satisfactory progress will be made in our understanding of this great subject until we have cleared the ground by a reasonable method of Biblical interpretation. It is not only necessary to know what the Bible teaches, but also to be able to set a known and recognised value on its utterances. Until this is done, what is authoritative to one set of minds will have little or no weight with another set. And perhaps the greatest value of this book lies not in its utterances on its chosen subject, but rather the fresh illustration which it affords of the rational and yet reverent handling of Holy Scripture.

The importance of this line of inquiry will be seen if we ask this one question. Did the writers of the New Testament possess any idea of the infinite, of endless existence? It will be admitted that this idea is distinctive of modern and not of ancient philosophy. And if it be found that all that the men of the first century could entertain was the idea of an age or rule, perhaps re-duplicated many times, we shall feel how fruitless many of our discussions have been. It is clear that before we ask what they taught, we must find out what with their range of mental and spiritual faculty they could receive. Reception must have preceded revelation.

This being granted, we must also get to know how the statements would impress those to whom they were made. And this knowledge can only be obtained by a knowledge of the primitive vernacular. It is not enough to read and interpret the Greek terms; for in some instances the Greek would have to be watered down into the spoken language of the new converts. It is a moot question as to whether our Lord usually spoke Greek; and it seems highly probable that many of the Syrian and Asian Christians would need to have Christian thought presented to them in their own tongue. It seems therefore a useless task to try and recover the exact shades of meaning once conveyed. In fact, the probability is that no exact shades

were conveyed. Certain broad and vague generalities sufficed to impress the mind and awaken the conscience concerning a judgment to come; and these are the only ideas which are now recoverable because none others existed. We are confirmed in this view by the exhaustive inquiry of the ninth chapter into the original meaning of the Greek terms which are used. This is perhaps the most valuable as it is a very able part of the book. It shows the whole weight of Scripture to be against the once popular and mediæval notion of an everlasting torment, or rather it shows this element to be absent from the various passages which were supposed to teach it. Any defender of that theory will have a most formidable task in endeavouring to meet the calm and scholarly exegesis given in such detail.

On the other hand we cannot acquit even this chapter of an apparent inconsistency. For while it is shown and argued that the Greek terms are large, general and indefinite, yet a very distinct and incisive conclusion is drawn—namely, that the impenitent will perish. The doctrine is, in fact, the "Life in Christ" theory, without its affirmations of life and of the intermediate state. Capital punishment is executed at death or destructive processes are allowed full play after a period of probation, and the existence of the moral being comes to an end.

It is clear that either the New Testament terminology is general and vague, and, if so, no distinct theory can be constructed; or else the terminology is definite, and, as a consequence, we may come to a definite conception respecting the future. We are shut up to one or other of these alternatives. We cannot have both. It is this hankering after a theory which vitiates so much of the thinking of our day. Men are not content to remain in the dim region of the vague and uncertain. They think that without a theory they cannot preach, that they cannot profess, that they cannot consistently become members of Christ's visible Church, and that they are not faithful to Christ's own teaching. Hence they throw together as many texts as they can think of, and come to a settled conclusion, which

they call the orthodox doctrine of future rewards and punishments.

Prebendary Row has not escaped from this tendency, and on vague and confessedly popular language he has erected a positive and scientific, not to say a materialistic, conception of the future of mankind. And no doubt this will be satisfactory to a large number of readers; because the one thing which the mind finds irksome is vexatious delay about coming to a decision. Decision is the great desideratum. Whether the decision be correct is often, though unconsciously, a secondary consideration!

We are far from saying that the annihilation of the finally impenitent may not be regarded as one of the probabilities of the future. Nor, on the other hand, should we dismiss the "larger hope" from our fondest wishes. But when these probabilities harden into certainties, when they are aired as a veritable part of the substance of revelation, they become as mischievous as the theory which they are intended to displace.

This is all the more to be regretted, because there is a failure to attach any specific or intelligible meaning to the word life. It is a vital part of all these discussions that we should, if possible, know what Christ means when He promises to give us life. The "Life in Christ" theory is very clear, too clear we might almost add. Life means immortal existence. This is Christ's gift. But Prebendary Row is altogether at sea with regard to his own notions on this essential point. And at the same time he uses all the forces of his destructive criticism on the evangelical theory of conversion. But here again we notice that tendency to exaggeration to which we have already referred. It is quite possible to have no great love for the Calvinistic theology, and yet to state its main positions as its most thoughtful adherents would state them. We acquit Mr. Row of all conscious unfairness, but he is not altogether free from the vices of the controvertialist. We feel sure, for example, that the late Dean Mansel would not have accepted his representation of man's limited moral sense as the one put forth in the Bampton Lectures. And

we are as sure that many of the most able Calvinists would not think that passages in this treatise were an accurate reproduction of their views. The Predestinarian theory is described as a choice on the part of God, which is made "irrespective of all moral considerations in the elect" (p. 7). Again, the doctrine of original sin is a theory which "affirms that men are justly punishable for the tendency to evil which they bring with them into the world" (p. 126). We do not for a moment deny that this theory has been often put forth, and that it merits our moral reprobation. But surely it would be fair to add that many hold that men are born with a tendency to evil which they are able to curb, and that punishment is awarded not for the tendency but for neglecting to curb it. In other words, the tendency is not irresistible, or otherwise there would be no responsibility. So, again, a description is given of the doctrine of conversion which lays far too much stress on the consciousness of moral change, and far too little on the Divine origin of that change. And as it is certain that large numbers of Christians have little or no inward assurance of any great critical spiritual transformation, the amazing conclusion is drawn that the distinction between regenerate and unregenerate cannot be maintained. It seems to be forgotten, unknown it surely cannot be, that thousands of Evangelical teachers insist on the reality of a great spiritual change, while at the same time they attach little or no importance to any consciousness of its exact subjective processes. In fact, if we turn from page 225 to page 275, we find Mr. Row correcting himself, for he now defines eternal life to be "a passing out of a state of death into one of life . . . out of that condition in which his spiritual and moral powers and affections existed in a state of latency into one in which those powers and affections pass into a condition of active energy" (p. 275). There are a very large number who would be willing to accept this as a correct though an incomplete definition of conversion. We should say—let us leave the question of suddenness as being a metaphysical one, which can be decided on purely psychological grounds. The fact

remains that eternal life makes an enormous difference in its possessor now; and the question meets us as to what will be the future effects on character and destiny of this possession. It may be true that chances will be given after death of obtaining this precious gift; but the fact that such a life is obtainable tends to confirm the "popular" notion that there is, or will be, a broad distinction between the converted and the unconverted. The "popular theory" may not be in the Scripture; and yet the popular *distinction* may be the very thing which the Scripture teaches, and which Mr. Row himself admits that it teaches when he comes to expound an important passage. And it is of far greater moment to seize and hold this distinction than to explode a thousand theories, partly true and partly false. As to suddenness, there certainly have been enough cases of this kind to prove them to be possible, and as there must be a "moment" of commencement in all finite life, we might find, if we knew enough of spiritual processes, that all conversions were in their beginnings momentary. And further, many conversions have been so startling in their thoroughness as to justify especially an Eastern writer in calling them new creations. But there remains the all-important point conceded by Mr. Row, that there is now a distinction between a spiritual state of death and of life. What is it?

We wish that he had bent more of his energy to discover and define this. He would have then given us a more adequate conception of it than that it is a quickening into energy of man's latent moral and spiritual powers. We should have had some reference to the forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ, and to a conscious reception of God's favour by faith in Christ. And though life in Christ is too full and large for human definition, we certainly should have had a more approximate idea than that which is here given us. Until we have some adequate conception of spiritual life, it does not seem possible to gain any satisfactory view of spiritual death. In the absence of the former, it seems, therefore, inconclusive to say that eternal death can only mean the cessation of conscious

existence. The definition of life is too thin; and that of death is too sharp.

The mental attitude assumed toward the future is indicated in the following sentence about the overwhelming majority of mankind. "I can only conceive of two alternatives as possible ones; either that they will be blotted out of existence or that there will be a condition of things beyond the grave in which they will enter on a more favourable state of probation than has been vouchsafed to them here." (p. 284). But why need we be driven to choose between these two alternatives when we are told of the few and many stripes, when we feel sure that God will deal with each individual case according to its merits, and when we are at liberty to believe that God will fulfil His purpose in many ways?

Many seem to forget that it is of the very nature of the future to be vague and uncertain in its details. It is a part of our discipline, a painful part sometimes; but always an inevitable and necessary one. It is different with facts of the past and with doctrines founded on them. The same kind of uncertainty does not attach to the Incarnation and to the Atonement. Their vagueness, if any, arises from the relation in which they stand to the infinite mind of God. But uncertainty about the future is an intentional hiding of God's purposes from us in order to press us into the duties of the present. The comparative silence of the Old Testament respecting the future state has been accounted for on this principle. The Israelites in Egypt had become familiarized with a religion which absorbed men's minds about a future resurrection of embalmed bodies; and it was necessary to insist on laws that had to be obeyed now and to unfold a God who was the Ruler of the existing world. And the New Testament only unfolds enough about the future to inspire us with courage and faith in our present life: no more. There is nothing to feed idle curiosity or to paralyze effort or to fill the imagination with luxurious, useless dreamings. If we expect more than is granted us we shall not only be disappointed, but we shall probably spin out some theories

which we think are found there; and so far we shall frustrate the purpose of God's silence by our own ignorant knowledge. These observations are not urged as a reason against inquiries like the present volume, but only against the definite conclusion concerning eternal death which is here reached. They are urged still more against any theory which would condemn the overwhelming majority of mankind to everlasting torments. It is indeed a pitiable thing that after Christianity has existed 1900 years we should find it necessary to examine the Scriptures to find whether this thing is so. But the exigencies of this century have made such an examination more than ever necessary. For with the opening up of Africa, India, China, and Japan we have a more adequate idea of what the human race is than our fathers had. The idea is simply overwhelming; and the idea that they and their fathers are destined to spend an eternity in torment has become utterly incredible.

But in our escape from one theory we are apt to think that our only defence must be to take up another. But what if the Scriptures teach nothing definite about the details of future life and death? Is this no defence? It is, we feel sure, our best defence for the simple reason that it is true. Not only is it true to Scripture: it is true also to the principles on which human life is regulated. We need details for to-day's duty, but general principles for future conduct. And these general principles are given with a power and a majesty which impress every thoughtful reader of the New Testament. The great duality between light and darkness which runs through all moral existence, is insisted upon with no faltering accents. Heaven is opened so that Stephen's face becomes radiant; and hell is revealed so that Felix trembles. If one of these factors be absent from our modern preaching we have so far departed from the faith once delivered to the saints, and our testimony will lose much of its efficacy. The cross is divisive. To preach Christ is to preach the One who will divide the sheep from the goats. To publish mercy is to take present and future misery for granted. But if

hearers are so deluded that the misery is hidden, we must cease to discourse for a time on the mercy, and insist on the greatness and depth of the misery of the sin from which our Lord wishes to save us.

In fact, the atonement is a very good test of the value of the other parts of the Christian faith which we are supposed to hold. If there is so little difference between the possessors of life and death that men feel that much the same consequences will come whether they stand on one side of the line or the other, we so far make light of Christ's atoning sufferings and love. Why such a sacrifice when the gain would be so small?

Tested by these considerations we shall find that neither the larger hope nor the life in Christ theory will yield all the satisfaction which we need. Underlying both of them there is a vicious taint of fatalism. Men are fated to be right at last is the teaching of the former; and most men are fated to be swept out of existence is the impression left by the latter. It is this streak of fatalism which demoralizes so much modern thinking which is otherwise of a very high order. So that when in renouncing Calvinism we thought ourselves free from it, we find that we have but run into its iron embrace under other forms.

We are far from decrying certainty in these matters. Certitude and fatalism are two very different matters. Moral certainty we have, and it ought to be a much more prominent element in the teaching and preaching of the day. It is certain that men will die, that death in any case is a great crisis, that every man will be judged and made manifest by Christ, that the consequences of moral conduct flow on into another and an unseen sphere, and that these consequences write themselves indelibly on the character and destiny, that there is a way of escape from personal sin in Christ's sacrifice, and that His grace can change the penal consequences of sin into means of cleansing, that God is angry with those who wilfully resist His holy law and harden themselves against His love in Christ, that it must be the worst curse that could befall a finite being to be exposed to the anger of God, and finally, that

where an escape from hell to heaven has been open to us by Divine mercy, it is foolhardy in the extreme to neglect so great a salvation. These surely are certitudes, enough in character and variety, to form the staple of Christian teaching.

But there is another region also intended to influence character, which has, however, only to do with probabilities. The origin, the existence and the issue of evil belong pre-eminently to this region. And the exact relation in which each responsible being stands to evil is also an imponderable subject where our weights and scales do not suffice. We can often say about a theory that it is not correct, because it cleaves to the very centre of all true notions of justice. But when we try to construct the modes and forms of Divine judgment we are attempting the impossible. It is not simply that we ought not to pry into the Divine secrets; but we cannot. God takes care that we shall not. He has planned our life on the principle that probabilities about the future life, as far as its details are concerned, are our best guide. Great moral and spiritual laws are revealed with an exactness which leaves no room for doubt. But it seems to be the will of Providence that we should not know into what precise form and fashion our future destiny will shape itself, and that we should be kept in ignorance concerning the fate of the vast majority of mankind. We may grow restive under the restraint, and insist that the knowledge is somewhere hidden as in a mine, in the Scriptures. But we waste labour in vain, and are so far unsubmissive to the limits under which our work has to be done. Socrates was the wisest man in Greece because he knew his own ignorance. And there are profound reasons in our nature why this may be the case with ourselves in the face of this insoluble problem. Prebendary Row has written an able and a necessary book, one which we hope will be the means of enlightening many minds. Other books will follow. Perhaps other theories will be discovered in the Bible. And yet, beyond the tremendous duality between life and death, and the urgent need there is to bring ourselves and the souls of others over the border line into fellowship

with the Life-giver, we shall still have to go on from generation to generation, walking the straight path which, though dark now, leads to light, and eschewing the crooked ways which, however pleasant now, go down unto death. And we shall have to do this knowing little about the goal, but knowing that faith and duty are God's way, and that unfaith and sin are but the devil's destructive snares. We are like an army, neither so sure of defeat or of victory, that it can afford to abandon itself to despair, or to sit down in security. False certitude about the future made the Thessalonians give up their secular work. The study of eschatology has so fevered many modern Christians as to lead them to be half-hearted about spiritual work. We hope that Mr. Row's book will do great good in showing both how much and how little we know. "The wages of sin is death: but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is a revelation both certain and vague, both inspiring and indefinite, both suggesting the most terrible fears and the most exalted hopes. Above all, it is sufficient. And when we have persuaded ourselves of this fact and act accordingly, we shall be sounder theologians and better Christians.

SAMUEL PEARSON.

GEMS OF AMERICAN SACRED POETRY.*

I.—SPINNING.

LIKE a blind spinner in the sun,
I tread my days;
I know that all the threads will run
Appointed ways;
I know each day will bring its task,
And, being blind, no more I ask.

* Under this heading we propose to give brief pieces from American poets, selected from books little known in this country.

I do not know the use or name
Of that I spin ;
I only know that some one came
And laid within
My hand the thread, and said, " Since you
Are blind, but one thing you can do."

Sometimes the threads go rough and fast,
And tangled fly ;
I know wild storms are sweeping past,
And fear that I
Shall fall, but dare not try to find
A safer place, since I am blind.

I know not why, but I am sure
That tint and place
In some great fabric to endure
Past time and race,
My threads will have ; so, from the first,
Though blind, I never felt accursed.

I think, perhaps, this trust has sprung
From one short word,
Said over me when I was young,
So young I heard
It, knowing not that God's name signed
My brow, and sealed me His, though blind.

But whether this be seal or sign,
Within, without,
It matters not. The bond Divine
I never doubt ;
I know He set me here, and still,
And glad, and blind, I wait His will.

But listen, listen, day by day,
To hear their tread,
Who bear the finished web away,
And cut the thread,
And bring God's message in the sun ;
" Thou poor blind spinner—work is done."

MRS. HELEN (FISKE) JACKSON.

II. THE PASTOR'S REVERIE.

THE pastor sits in his easy-chair,
With the Bible upon his knee.
From gold to purple, the clouds in the west
Are changing momentarily ;
The shadows lie in the valleys below,
And hide in the curtain's fold ;
And the page grows dim whereon he reads,
" I remember the days of old."

Not clear nor dark, as the Scripture saith,
The pastor's memories are ;
No day that is gone was shadowless,
No night was without its star.
But mingled bitter and sweet hath been
The portion of his cup :
" The hand that in love hath smitten," he saith,
" In love hath bound us up."

Fleet flies his thought over many a field
Of stubble and snow and bloom,
And now it trips through a festival,
And now it halts at a tomb ;
Young faces smile in his reverie,
Of those that are young no more ;
And voices are heard that only come
With the winds from a far-off shore.

He thinks of the day when first, with fear
And faltering lips, he stood
To speak in the sacred place the Word
To the waiting multitude ;
He walks again to the house of God
With the voice of joy and praise,
With many whose feet long time have pressed
Heaven's safe and blessed ways.

He enters again the homes of toil,
And joins in the homely chat ;
He stands in the shop of the artisan ;
He sits where the Master sat—
At the poor man's fare and the rich man's feast.
But who to-day are the poor,
And who are the rich ? Ask him who keeps
The treasures that ever endure.

Once more the green and the grove resound
With the merry children's din ;
He hears their shout at the Christmas tide,
When Santa Claus stalks in.
Once more he lists while the camp-fire roars
On the distant mountain-side,
Or, proving apostleship, plies the brook
Where the fierce young troutlings hide.

And now he beholds the wedding train
To the altar slowly move,
And the solemn words are said that seal
The sacrament of love.
Anon at the font he meets once more
The tremulous youthful pair,
With a white-robed cherub crowing response
To the consecrating prayer.

By the couch of pain he kneels again ;
Again the thin hand lies
Cold in his palm, while the last far look
Steals into the steadfast eyes ;
And now the burden of hearts that break
Lies heavy upon his own—
The widow's woe and the orphan's cry,
And the desolate mother's moan.

So blithe and glad, so heavy and sad,
Are the days that are no more,
So mournfully sweet are the sounds that float
With the winds from a far-off shore.
For the pastor has learned what meaneth the word
That is given him to keep,—
" Rejoice with them that do rejoice,
And weep with them that weep."

It is not in vain that he has trod
This lonely and toilsome way.
It is not in vain that he has wrought
In the vineyard all the day ;
For the soul that gives is the soul that lives,
And, bearing another's load,
Doth lighten your own, and shorten the way,
And brighten the homeward road.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

HENRY IV. AND THE HUGUENOTS.*

THE story of the Huguenots has all the fascination of a romance, but there are in it also elements which make it one of the most suggestive passages in the records of the French nation. Amid all the crimes and horrors with which the annals of religious persecution are crowded, the ghastly tragedy of the St. Bartholomew's massacre is unique, and as the treacherous defenders of Rome have here furnished the most terrible illustration of the falsehood and cruelty to which their assumed right to rule the souls of men may lead, so, on the other hand, in the constancy and courage with which their injustice was resisted have we some of the brightest illustrations of the heroism inspired by the love of truth and liberty. The names of Coligny, Conde, Henry of Navarre, are quite sufficient to awaken interest in a tale with which we fear Englishmen are by no means too familiar. The illustrious deeds of these great actors have often been the theme of historian or poet, but of those who have been stirred by such a ballad as that in which Macaulay has told the story of Ivry, and who have got some vague idea of the heroic prince with his white plume, and perhaps also of others whose names are associated with him either as his predecessors or his comrades in that great struggle, how few there are who have cared to inquire into the real nature of that protracted conflict, or of its influence upon the subsequent history of France. Dr. Baird has told the story with more fulness than it has been told before, and his able and instructive volumes ought to be studied not only by all who are interested in the struggle between Protestantism and Romanism in the sixteenth century, but quite as much by those who would understand the subsequent history of the French people. Dr. Baird cannot be called a pictorial writer. Indeed, a little more of dramatic skill in his narrative would add greatly to its charm. But he is always lucid, and even when he has to thread his way

* *The Huguenots and Henry of Navarre.* By HENRY M. BAIRD. Two Vols. (Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co.)

through obscure and uninviting paths he generally succeeds in making his story not only clear but to a certain degree attractive. No doubt the reader must often find it hard to keep up an interest in the tangled intrigues or the petty combats which fill so large a space in the narrative, but these had to be told, and it is only fair to Dr. Baird to say that he has shown no little skill in his treatment of them. The book is undoubtedly the history of the period, and the author deserves great credit for the dispassionate spirit in which it is written, and for his desire to be fair to all parties.

How much it must have cost to preserve this fairness when dealing with some of the prominent actors in this eventful drama can only be understood by those who carefully peruse the record for themselves. The present volumes deal with the period following the Bartholomew massacre, and cover the history of thirty-six years, during which France was convulsed by "wars waged for the purpose of constraining the Protestant minority in the kingdom to a conformity with the creed and rites approved by the Catholic majority." These wars are dignified by the name of "religious," though anything less religious in motive, in spirit, or in the mode of carrying them on it is not easy to conceive. "The Holy League," which sought first to coerce Henry III. into a more vigorous persecution of the Protestants, and afterwards to prevent the succession of the Huguenot king of Navarre, was professedly a religious confederacy on which the blessing of the Pope was pronounced, for which the prayers of all Catholic Christendom were offered, and to which Philip of Spain was ready to give more substantial help. In reality it was quite as much an aristocratic rebellion intended to gratify the insatiable ambition of the Guises, and trading upon the bigotry and superstition of the people for this end. "It," says Dr. Baird, "found the pretext for its existence in the popular belief that the ancestral religion was in danger of decline and ultimate ruin because of the lukewarmness of the reigning monarch (Henry III.) and the heterodoxy of his prospective suc-

cessor." The result was the extraordinary spectacle presented in these volumes of a monarch, whose abject devotion to Rome was only equalled by the general frivolity and sensualism of his life, assailed by a league whose one professed object was the defence of the Romish faith, and receiving the support of the Huguenots of whom he had been so relentless a persecutor.

It is worth while to study with some care the character of this prince—the last of the Valois race—the last of that band of brothers (Francis II., Charles IX., and the Duke of Alençon, who never ascended the throne, being the others) through whom Catherine de Medicis exercised so baleful an influence over the destinies of the French nation. The enemies of democracy are continually inviting us, and never more so than at the present time, to contemplate the crimes of the Revolution, and in them to see evidences of the unfitness of the people for self-government. It is only fair to carry our research further back to see how far their rulers had proved their fitness for the absolute power they wielded, and to learn the character of the influence which they must have exercised on their people. Nations are educated as well as men, though the process of their education extends over centuries. The frivolous but cruel tyranny under which France groaned so long, the debasement of religion into an instrument of personal ambition, or an excuse for treachery and bloodshed, the tortuous and dastardly policy to which the noblest men of the nation were sacrificed, and by which the hopes of liberty were crushed out, all left their impression on the national character and history. In Henry III. we have the incarnation of these tendencies in their worst form. Had he been a profoundly religious man some excuse might have been urged in extenuation of his crimes against humanity. But so far as his personal conduct was concerned, he was utterly contemptuous of the restraints of that religion for which he was ready to persecute others to the death. He had, indeed, what may be described as his periods of fanaticism, when it seemed as though he were about to become a very saint, but there was a grotesque-

ness in these endeavours after saintliness which made them ridiculous rather than edifying. One of them is thus described by Dr. Baird :

The "Flagellants" of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, had been in turn held up for popular admiration by the clergy, anathematized by papal authority, and committed to the flames by the Inquisition. The superstition for which they had received such opposite treatment was subsequently discovered to be a profitable delusion, and under the name of "Penitents" the new flagellants were associated, with the Church's sanction, in confraternities which attracted, by reason of their singularity, not a little attention and surprise. It was in the papal city of Avignon that the Penitents first made their appearance on French soil. Clothed in long gowns reaching from head to foot, with no part of the face visible except the eyes, they paraded the streets, sometimes by day, but more frequently by night, chanting lustily the mournful verses of the "Miserere." To express the idea of sorrow for sin more forcibly, each penitent was provided with a whip well knotted, or furnished with metal points, by means of which he lashed the exposed back and shoulders of the brother whom he followed. It was a weird but loathsome spectacle, from which sensible men turned away with mingled shame and indignation. But Henry of Valois was both interested and pleased. The novel practice might prove a pleasant diversion, and if it could atone for moral delinquencies, the pain endured would be a cheap price to pay for the purchase of absolution. Was it not likely that the whip, in the hands of courtiers, would be more tolerable than the scourge of his own conscience? However this may be, the frivolous monarch no sooner saw the performance, than he expressed a desire to take part in it. His example was at once followed by the courtiers. The king having become a member of that part of the confraternity which clothed itself in white—the "Blancs Battus"—Catherine made herself the patron of the "black penitents," and the Cardinal of Armagnac joined the "blue." It was not long before every seigneur or gentilhomme of the court was enrolled in one of the confraternities, whose cause he espoused with an ardour that would have done no discredit to the partisans of the factions of the circus in the imperial times of Rome or Constantinople (Vol. I. p. 38-39).

It is hardly surprising that a monarch who could stoop to such depths of folly as these should easily and speedily rush from this extreme of devotion to an extreme of effeminate luxury and sensual indulgence. Superstition of this kind, as it does not spring from any religious motive, so neither can it exert any lasting influence upon

the character. Of the king who had these insane fits of penitence and asceticism, and who was said at one time to contemplate the exchange of his crown for the cowl of the monk, it was said by an eminent Frenchman that he had inherited from his ancestors only their vices, while the English ambassador, writing to Walsingham, describes his court as a very hell, and that at a time anterior to his worst excesses. Such men are great psychological puzzles, or rather they would be, did not the religious teaching of their Church help to explain the mystery. Henry believed himself to be the champion of the faith. He certainly hated the Huguenots with a perfect hatred. He was, indeed, willing to negotiate with them, to give them large promises, to wear even the semblance of friendship, and there came a time when, in order to save his crown, he stooped to ask their aid, and in order to secure it was willing to give them a measure of liberty. But he never ceased to hate them, with a malignity which was diabolical, and whenever he dared he gratified the passion to its full extent. There is no reason to doubt that this was inspired by a blind devotion to the Church of Rome, which its priests encouraged him to regard as religious. But the life of this "religious" king cannot be told. There are in it scenes of a loathsome debauchery, the details of which are so gross that the pen cannot record them. In him the vices were developed in an abnormal degree, and it is not easy to find a virtue by which they were relieved. He was an unfaithful husband, a treacherous ally, an unpatriotic monarch. He had no instincts of statesmanship to guide his policy, and no scruples of conscience to restrain his appetite. Sometimes he offends us by his silly effeminacy, more frequently he disgusts by his outrageous wickedness. "Now and then" (says Dr. Baird) "a wit more audacious than the rest of his kind ventured to hint, even to the king himself, what the world thought of the moral atmosphere surrounding the throne; as when on one occasion Henry having remarked to his companion after dinner that he had always heard it said that whenever the royal Court stopped for ten days or a fortnight in any place where the

plague was raging, the pestilence was sure to disappear, Rucellai promptly replied, 'Yes, sire, one devil drives the other away.'

This was the king who reigned over France for fifteen years. Sometimes he was seen going about with a basket suspended by a ribbon round his neck, and containing favourite dogs, on whom he lavished an attention and thought denied to his subjects. At others he exhibited himself to the eye of an astounded world in the capacity of a shrewd broker, driving bargains for the purchase of the offices of State, once bestowed as rewards of meritorious services, and paying the purchase money out of his own pocket. Anon he is a devotee, constant at mass, wearing a penitent's dress, and aping a penitent's attitudes and habits, spending hours singing with the monks, and insisting that others should practise the austerities he imposed upon himself. Once again he is heard of in his retirement, indulging in foulest orgies, and revelling in the most loathsome vices. Yet this man's soul is afflicted with grief because of the heresy to which his people are exposed, and fancies he is doing the work of heaven and proving himself a true son of his Church by employing fire and sword to extirpate its teachers. And the "Holy Catholic Church" approved his doings. It is true that he fell by the hand of an assassin—a monk whom the Church blessed when his foul deed was accomplished—but the punishment was not inflicted for any of his sins against his people, or his offences against morality and decency. These might have enjoyed impunity, and the adulterer, the liar, the murderer, might have died in the odour of sanctity had he not been suspected of leniency towards the unhappy Huguenots. Assuredly there was no sin to which he was less disposed. The "Holy League" had not in its ranks one who hated heresy and heretics more than he, and, if he seemed to have any terms with them, it was not that he hated them less, but that he loved his crown more. Even in defending that, however, he was slow to call in or even to accept Huguenot aid. It is one of the peculiarities of his character (and there were numbers of the same type who were promi-

nent in the struggles which grew out of the Reformation) that he was sincere in his attachment to the Church of Rome, and believed that he was a good Christian while setting at nought, not only the spirit of the New Testament, but the first laws of morality. Dark and dreary is the catalogue of his crimes. False to every one who trusted him, treating his people as though they were meant only to provide means for his sensual tastes, abusing every prerogative which he enjoyed as sovereign of a proud and powerful nation, stained with the blood of men whose only fault was their desire to obey God rather than men, this frivolous voluptuary, this trebly perjured prince, this cowardly assassin, one of the authors of the fearful crime of St. Bartholomew, had yet been so trained that he regarded himself as a model of piety. Is it wonderful that a nation which had been taught by its Church to regard such men as saints should have rejected both the priests and the faith which they sought to impose on the people? Rousseau and Voltaire did not work such injury to Christianity as the Valois princes or the cardinals and dukes of the houses of Medici and Guise.

Unfortunately, when we turn to the other side, and look at Henry of Navarre, we have a character hardly less difficult to understand. It need not be said that between him and the infamous cousin whom he succeeded there can be no comparison. Henry IV., despite many faults which are brought out with sufficient distinctness in the narrative, was a high-minded man. He was not a faultless hero, still less was he a saint, but he was a gallant prince, and even in his vices was far removed from the loathsome degradation of his predecessor. Still, his life, as is well known, was strangely out of keeping with the position he filled as "Protector of the Huguenot Church," and was a cause of sore grief and trouble to Theodore Beza and others of the reformers at his Court. His proclamations and speeches are full of lofty sentiments, but these are in strange contrast with his private conduct. One satisfactory point in connection with this marked inconsistency between his words and actions is that not even the sense of his value

to their cause could lead the Huguenot preachers to be silent as to his faults. Writing of his address to the Assembly at Rochelle in 1588, Professor Baird says :

We are each moment tempted to ask ourselves whether his auditors were able to banish from their minds the name of the Countess of Grammont, and the memory of that fatal delay after Contras ; whether the grave deputies could suppress the feeling that the man who spoke so eloquently in favour of purity, while his private life was not above reproach, was but playing a part. Henry of Navarre's associates in the great struggle for religious liberty now in progress were no cowards. Not even the strong conviction that his assistance in the desperate struggle was indispensable to the success of the good cause was potent enough to seal their lips. In this very crisis there were found deputies bold and candid enough to remonstrate with him on his present course. His faults and his blunders, his prodigal gifts to the unworthy and his neglect of the deserving, his favours extended to members of the League in the vain hope of winning them over, his amours, and the great expense they entailed at a time when faithful servants of his crown were dying of hunger—these and other things were told him to his face with wonderful frankness. He learned much of what upright men thought of his course from the ministers of the gospel, whom, in the parlance of the times, he had not yet succeeded in "civilizing." Jean Gardesi, a prominent pastor of Montauban, enjoys the honour of being described by Agrippa d'Aubigné as "the most severe Nathan" among them all. (II. 73.)

Such courage is a credit to any cause, and it had its undoubted effect on the king, who had noble elements in his character which it was possible at times to rouse into activity and even to predominance. He was indeed one of those characters in which elements of good and evil are perpetually struggling for the mastery. In Sir Noel Paton's latest picture of the "Choice" we have a young warrior in full armour, exposed to the tempting suggestions of a siren, who offers him all the pleasures of the world, and presses them upon his acceptance with an eagerness which will accept no denial. Around her are signs of weakness and corruption, which might have warned him of the peril of listening to her advances, had they not been hidden from his view ; while there is above him a gentle angel patiently and quietly seeking to draw him from the influence which would have worked only his ruin. Henry IV. might have

served as the model for such a picture, except that the artist represents his hero as trampling upon the evil, whereas the king succumbed to its power. No doubt it was a severe trial for an ambitious spirit when Henry had before him the prospect of a peaceful possession of the crown of France at the cost of the renunciation of his professed creed and his submission to the power of Rome. All this (said the tempter) —undisputed sovereignty, the throne, and all the licence which a monarch can enjoy, unbridled indulgence and unrestricted luxury, shall be thine if thou wilt worship me. Alas ! the bait was too enticing. Nowhere have we a more striking picture of the struggle and the base surrender than that which Professor Baird has given. The secret of the king's fall is not far to seek. He really had no creed to give up. He had Protestant ideas, associations, prejudices, but Protestant truth had never touched his heart, and when the time of trial came he had no power of endurance. Like his rival, his life teaches the vanity of a religion which has not its root in the heart, and does not govern the whole conduct. But it teaches us still further (and the lesson is needed in our own times) the weakness of chivalrous sentiment, of lofty ideals, of sympathy with liberty and right, in truth, of the qualities which make a great political leader, if the basis of character is not a living faith in God. We must take our leave of this most interesting book. It would need a volume to bring out all its points and lessons. We only wish that some competent hand would prepare a summary of its story ; of the Holy League in its hollow hypocrisy and mockery of the religion it professed to defend ; of Catherine de Medici and the arts and sins with which she worked out the aims of her ambition ; of Henry of Guise and his desperate attempts to win a crown for himself under the mask of service to God ; and of the Huguenots with their heroism, their simple faith, and their lofty courage.

BYGONE DAYS IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

IV.—AN ENGLISH ANCESTOR OF EMERSON.

THE river bright with water lilies which Cowper celebrated as "the lilled Ouse," is the one natural feature of note in North Bedfordshire. It certainly seems bent in making the most of itself, for so leisurely does it wind about and in and out, that in the short space of eight miles the traveller by rail has seven times crossed its stream. On the north bank of the most northerly bend, and on a considerable eminence overlooking the valley, stand Odell or Woodhull Castle and church. The castle so called has nothing about it now suggestive of Norman fortress or stormy baron, but it really has incorporated into itself the ruins of a stronghold which once overlooked and kept the valley in awe. Here, in the time of the first King Edward, lived John de Wahull, lord of the town and patron of the church, and so absolute was his control that, as his charter provides, "the servi cannot marry their daughters, nor sell their foals, to wit their male foals, without the licence of the lord." The tenures by which some of his tenants held their houses and lands are curious to note. Robert Firegod, whose name was surely of heathen origin, held his one messuage and seven acres on condition of "maintaining a lamp burning in the church for the said Lord John;" Joan Maybee held hers by providing "two pounds of wax for the light of the blessed Mary in the church aforesaid." Walter le Sergeant paid for his cottage by bringing twelve arrows, and William Prikavant a hooded falcon; John le Parmenter had a cottage with a croft for 18d., suit of Court and three capons. Hugh with the beard held a virgate of land, or something like thirty acres, for three-pence by the year; while it is noted that Hugh de Wylde "holds of the same Lord John, one virgate of land for one garland of roses by the year," and Henry le Clerk seven acres, "for a half-penny and one bundle of rushes, viz., a root of ginger."

It is, however, with days long subsequent to these that

we are now concerned, and not so much with the lord of Odell Castle, as with the rector of Odell church. The church itself is worth looking at for its own sake. It is a large and well-proportioned building in the Perpendicular style, having at the west end a pinnaced tower with fret-work under the battlements, and on the south side an embattled porch with a stone roof. It presents altogether a handsome appearance, and has picturesque surroundings as there it stands by the highway side, the river gleaming in the valley to the south, and Odell Great Wood stretching away in extent some three hundred acres to the north. Like the rest of its neighbours, this parish church has shared the varying fortunes of the ecclesiastical Establishment of the land. As we have seen, in pre-Reformation times the lamp was kept burning to the Blessed Virgin; then came Protestant rectors under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. After these we have a Popish reaction under Mary, about which Strype tells us the following curious story in connection with Cardinal Pole's visitation of 1556: "Sir Oswald Butler, late rector of Wodall, was presented for that he still lived with his wife. He never was ordained priest, yet ministered all the sacraments in the late schism. He submitted himself and was enjoined publick penance in the churches of Wodhall and St. Mary in Bedford." This discredited rector whose Protestant orders were not recognized by the Papal Church, and who had to stand in the white sheet of penance before his own congregation for living honestly with his own wife, was succeeded a few years later by a man who was not merely a Protestant, but a staunch Puritan. Dr. Edward Bulkeley, the father of that Peter Bulkeley with whom this paper is mainly concerned, was a man of good family and estate belonging to the Cheshire branch of the Bulkeleys. He was one of the Commissioners for the "levye of armour in Bedfordshire among the clergie," and an author of some repute. A black letter volume of his is preserved in the British Museum which leaves no doubt as to the strength of his Protestant feeling. It is entitled "An Answer to the frivolous and foolish reasons set downe by the Rhemish

Iesuites and Papists in their Preface before the New Testament by them lately translated into English, which have mooved them to forsake the originall fountaine of the Greeke wherein the Spirit of God did indite the Gospell and the holie Apostles did write it, to follow the streame of the Latin translation, translated we know not by whom. By E. B. Londini Impensis Georg. Bishop, 1588." The dedication is to Sir Francis Walsyngham, and is dated "At Woodhull the 9 of Aprill, 1588."

Peter Bulkeley, the second son of this staunch old Puritan, was born at Odell, January 31, 1582-3. At the age of sixteen he matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and subsequently graduating with distinction became fellow of his college. After some years of residence at Cambridge, in January 1619-20, he succeeded his father in the rectory of Odell and in the possession of a considerable estate. To all human appearance he seemed just as likely to live the quiet round of his life and here to end his days as did his father before him. But soon there were signs of coming storm on the face of the national and ecclesiastical sky, storm whose strong lashings and beatings were to be felt even as far as quiet little Odell by the banks of the Ouse. Some five years after Peter Bulkeley came to be rector, Charles I. came to be king and the coming in of Charles meant, as all the world knows, the coming in of Archbishop Laud, a man narrow enough in all conscience, but strenuous and intense, and destined to leave his impress broad and deep on the Anglican Church. The first signs of his influence so far as Odell was concerned are to be found in these three special entries in the parish register: "The Archbishop's Visitation, August 27, 1634; the Archdeacon's Visitation, September 22, 1634; the Bishop's Visitation, August 17, 1635." The fact was, Laud had resolved upon a much more searching order of things than had hitherto prevailed. We all know what is meant by the ordinary kind of visitation where the clergy assemble in the principal town of the archdeaconry, listen to a sermon, dine together, discuss and denounce the Dissenters, and according to rustic belief exchange their sermons for

the year, each parish, according to the old story, curiously wondering why it, in particular, always got the worst of it in the exchange. Something like this had prevailed before Laud's time. Among the MSS. in the British Museum * there is an interesting sketch of one of these occasions, which, as it has never been printed so far as we know, and as it contains the earliest reference to Mr. Cotton, the great New England divine, we may be pardoned if we turn aside in gossiping fashion to notice. It is an account of Bishop Neile's visitation in Lincoln Diocese in 1614, and was probably written by the Bishop himself. At Stony Stratford, Dr. Hacket was the preacher, "one point in whose exhortation was not so seasonable for a visitation, viz., to press the statute of 12d. for absence from the Church upon the Sabbath Dayes. Our Table Talk at Dinner was whether children dying before baptism might be saved? Affirmative maintained." "Bedford: Mr. Nokes, B.D., the preacher. From 2 Cor. ii. 16, he did strongly maintain that the order of Bishops was in degree above the order of Presbyters, against which doctrine one Mr. Dillingham did seem at Dinner time much to oppose." This, we may say by the way, was Thomas Dillingham, the vicar of Dean, one of King James's translators, and in the days of the Long Parliament one of the two sent up from Bedfordshire to the Westminster Assembly of Divines. "At Luton Mr. Rawlinson preached an eloquent and excellent sermon, if he had not been too curious in assigning the place of the abode of Elias before the coming of Christ." At Huntingdon "Mr. Hearne preached an acute and wittie sermon from Proverbs xx. 4," but afterwards there was "no table-talk tending to Divinitie." At Louth there were many grave and learned ministers but all silent, so that their gravity was more conspicuous than their learning. At Melton, as at some other places "the text was more to the business than the sermon." The "Conference at Leicester" like another Leicester Conference of later date, "was to no great purpose." At Horncastle they had "a very sweet and eloquent sermon, very handsomely taxing

* Additional MSS. 5853, ff. 249 et seq.

the combinations in our times against the clergy." The second sermon that day was well approved, because the preacher, dealing with the neglect of the clergy, "very discretely delivered that point in Latin. Our table conference was to no great purpose." "At Boston Mr. Cotton, M.A., the preacher. He was but a young man, but by report a man of great gravity and sanctity of life; a man of rare parts for his learning, eloquent, and well-spoken. Mr. Chancellor and myselfe heard three of his sermons in two days which three were six houres long very neare. The sermons were delivered modestly and soberly, and were well worthy of all commendation, but to our minds each of the three was poisoned with some error or other, such as, that the Heathen would not be condemned for not believing in Christ; that the office of an Apostle was totally extinct; and that reading was not preaching." Such is a report at first hand of a Visitation a few years before the time of Laud. In 1634 he resolved to make a Metropolitan Visitation by deputy, and to do it in mediæval fashion, that is to say, by personal visit made to each parish and not merely to certain centres. This was the revival of a claim on the part of the archbishop which had long fallen into disuse and had always been contested. For in effect it superseded the bishop in his own diocese, and handed over the episcopate of the see to the metropolitan. When Laud proceeded to make such Visitation of the diocese of Lincoln, Bishop Williams strenuously protested, but, as we have seen in a former paper, he had fallen upon evil times, and shorn of his power he was contemptuously pushed aside.

In the summer of 1634, Sir Nathaniel Brent as Laud's Vicar-General set forth on this Metropolitan Visitation. He began at the city of Lincoln, and worked his way south. While many evils were corrected that needed correction, the weight of Sir Nathaniel's authority was, no doubt according to his instructions, brought to bear most heavily upon the Puritans in the diocese. "At Huntingdon," he reports, "divers ministers in that division were suspected for Puritanisme, but being questioned, they professed absolute conformitie." As the parish register of Odell

informs us, he reached that neighbourhood on the 27th of August, about which visit he himself has this to say : " Mr. Peter Bulkeley, rector of Odell, suspected for Puritanisme, was suspended. He came to me to Aylesburie, when he confessed he never used the surplisse or the crosse in baptism. He is to appear in the High Commission Court the first Court day in November, if he reform not before." *

Here then was Peter Bulkeley at bay, a good man's conscience face to face with arbitrary ecclesiastical power. What will he do ? He has many ties to this parish of his where he was born, where his father ministered, and where he himself has been his successor these fourteen years and more. His kindred are about him ; it will be hard to tear himself from them. His wife is the daughter of Sir Richard Chetewode at Odell Castle near by, and his sister the wife of Sir Oliver St. John, his neighbour, the godly knight of Keysoe. There are deeper reasons still. At that very time God's work was going on in the parish in a way that had gladdened his heart. " His ministry had then a notable success in the conversion of many unto God." Must all this be stopped ? Yes, it must. For in the eyes of ecclesiastics like Laud the bringing of souls to God is as nothing compared to the maintenance of rubrics in the Church. There are only these two alternatives—Peter Bulkeley must conform or go. He can make his choice, and he did make it ; made it in the same resolute spirit which led Luther to say before him, " I cannot yield ; it must happen with me as God wills." Many tender voices then as always were pleading for compliance. It touched him keenly to think of wife and children facing the stormy Atlantic and the unknown perils of the farther shore. He could only say as Bunyan said after him : " The thoughts of these things would break my heart to pieces. . . . But yet recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick. O, I saw in this condition, I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children. Yet, thought I, I must do it ; I must do it." So felt and so reasoned Peter

* State Papers, Domestic, Charles I., 1634, cclxxiv. 12.

Bulkeley at Odell, some nine miles from that Bedford Gaol, from within which Bunyan wrote these words a quarter of a century later. As Cotton Mather says of this Puritan rector: "The concern which his renewed soul had for the pure worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the planting of Evangelical Churches to exercise that worship caused him to leave and sell all in hope of gaining the 'pearl of great price' among those that peopled New England upon those glorious ends."

In 1635, the year after his suspension by Laud, Peter Bulkeley left his native land. He could not well go sooner, for he had to realize a considerable estate then worth £6,000, and therefore of present value of something like £25,000. He had, too, to go stealthily for fear of being intercepted. Therefore, sending his wife and the greater part of his family as though on a visit to the coast, he and his three eldest sons joined them a few weeks later. There went with them also another Puritan minister from Bedfordshire, Zachary Symmes, of the Priory Church at Dunstable, who brought with him several inhabitants of that town, they together making up another band of pilgrims for New England to join the Pilgrim Fathers who had gone there some fifteen years before. Their first settlement was at Cambridge, near Boston. But after a time, not desiring to build upon another man's line of things, carrying a good number of planters with him, Peter Bulkeley went up the country "through unknowne woods," till he came to the banks of the slowly moving Musketaquid, or Meadow River, which perhaps reminded him of the quietly gliding Ouse, from the side of which he had come. This country at that time was inhabited by a tribe of Massachusetts Indians under a powerful Sachem, named Tahattawan. In company with Major Willard, a Kentish man, and John Russell, he entered into negotiations with this tribe, and, like William Penn in Pennsylvania, not by violent conquest, but by honest purchase he acquired a settlement among them. To the new town thus founded Bulkeley gave the name of Concord, in the hope, no doubt, that here he had at last reached a haven of rest. It goes without saying that he established

there also a Christian church, the twelfth founded in the Colony, as said by some, continuing for the remaining twenty years of his life pastor of the little community, of which he was the father and founder. There is a delightful old-world flavour about the account Cotton Mather gives of the good man.

He had (he says) many and godly servants, whom, after they had lived with him a fit number of years, he still dismissed with bestowing farms upon them, and so took others after the like manner, to succeed them in *their* service and *his* kindness. He was a most excellent scholar, a very well-read person, and one who in his advice to young students gave demonstration that he knew what would go to make a scholar. But it being essential unto a *scholar* to love a scholar, so did he; and in token thereof endowed the library of Harvard College with no small part of his own. And he was therewithal a most exalted Christian, full of those devotions which accompany a conversation in heaven. It was observed that his neighbours hardly ever came into his company, but whatever business he had been talking of, he would let fall some holy, serious, divine, and useful sentence upon them ere they parted. The observance which his own people had for him, was also paid him from all sorts of people throughout the land; but especially from the ministers of the country who would still address him as a father, a prophet, a counsellor on all occasions. The small things of his Church grew to greater until he was translated into the regions which afford nothing but *concord* and glory, leaving his well-fed flock in the wilderness unto the pastoral care of his worthy son, Mr. Edward Bulkeley.

Elizabeth, the daughter of this son Edward who succeeded him, becomes a link of interest in our story, for in 1665 she married the Rev. Joseph Emerson, the pastor of the Congregational Church at Meriden, and from her three sons, great-grandsons of Peter Bulkeley, sprang in direct line the Emersons of New England. Thus a long succession of Christian ministers and intellectual leaders of whom Ralph Waldo Emerson was one descended from this Bedfordshire worthy, whom Laud drove from his peaceful parish. In a certain sense he is the patron saint as well as the founder of Concord, and traces of him are to be met with on every side. Of a dozen ministers who since 1635 have preached in the parish church of the place, five were either Bulkeleys or Emersons. In 1882 I met a theological student at Harvard who had just received the appointment

to the ministry at Concord, and he again was a Bulkeley and a direct descendant of the founder of the church. Others of his descendants also have elsewhere in the American States occupied, and still occupy, positions of honour and influence. As a Bedfordshire man, and for Peter Bulkeley's sake, I strolled through Concord on one of the days of May in the year I have named. The place is interesting for its own sake, as well as for his, as one of the prominent intellectual centres of New England life, having been described indeed in words which Tacitus first applied to Marseilles as "a place of Grecian culture and provincial frugality, mingled and well-blended." Here have lived the Emersons in long succession, and their kinsfolk the Ripleys, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his son, the Alcotts, and that interesting child of nature, Henry D. Thoreau, the author of "Walden." Having a commission for Miss Emerson I turned along the Lexington Road to the house where her father, the Concord philosopher, had lived for so long, and from which he had just passed away, for he had died while I was crossing the Atlantic. I was shown into his library. There was the desk at which he had written so long, there were his books, the portrait of Carlyle sent to him by Carlyle himself, and there, too, slowly withering were the two vases of flowers placed at his head and feet before men carried him forth. Living rather in the past than in the present, I wandered away from the house from which the master had gone to the place where they had laid the casket of his body, beneath the pine trees in what seems more like a forest glade than a burial-place for the dead. His grave newly closed was strewn with green branches of pine, and side by side with him and beneath the same leafy shade lie Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry Thoreau, while a few steps away sleeps his friend Hoar, on whose gravestone men have chiselled words full of sweet suggestiveness when placed over the dead: "The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber whose window opened towards the sun-rising: the name of the Chamber was Peace, where he slept till break of day; and then he awoke and sang."

It was a place to linger in, but the sun tarried not, and I struck across the fields to the Old Manse, in which not Peter Bulkeley himself, but a long line of his successors, had lived and died. Miss Ripley was living there at the time, the daughter of that good old Dr. Ripley, who, praying at the funeral of a dead parishioner, of whom little indeed that was good could be said, cast about charitably, and at last came out with this, "Lord, Thou knowest that Thy servant was good at fires," in other words, useful as a member of the fire-brigade. She courteously took me over the place, into the quaint old reception-room, and the quainter study where thousands of sermons had been written, where also Emerson wrote his "Nature" and Nathaniel Hawthorne his "Mosses from an Old Manse." It was from one of the three windows of this room, too, that one of Peter Bulkeley's successors stood watching the first outbreak of war between England and America, for it was just there to the north at the foot of the Manse orchard and by Concord Bridge that

Once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

After wandering over the old Manse and gathering up its associations, I was permitted to stroll into the Manse orchard at my own sweet will, and on a seat by the Concord river which flows at the foot I sat and mused. No wonder if in my thoughts there was a strange mixture of the Old World and the New, of Odell Rectory and Concord Manse, of the lilied Ouse and the not less lilied Musketaquid, of William Laud and Henry Thoreau, of Peter Bulkeley the Puritan and his descendant Ralph Emerson the transcendentalist, of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Nathaniel Brent. What if they could all have met in fact as they met in my fancy? It would require another Walter Savage Landor to construct an Imaginary Conversation fitted for the scene. Each man, however, may construct one for himself, I will content myself by imagining I hear Peter saying to his descendant Ralph words I find in that book

of his entitled, "The Gospel Covenant," preached in the New World and printed in the Old; the words are these—

Though in respect of order and government all things may become new, yet look not after new substantialls, new foundations. Thou hast had the foundation truly laid by many skilfull builders many yeares agoe; only some have built thereupon hay and stubble, instead of gold and precious stones. Let therefore the rooffe be new, but let the foundation be the same. Take heed of too much of that *new light* which the world is now gazing upon. Some have reported sad things concerning thee in this respect; so much new light breaking forth that the old zeale is almost extinct by it. Herein take heed. The old way is the good way.

JOHN BROWN.

IS NONCONFORMITY DECLINING?

THOSE who look at the broad facts as they strike a disinterested observer would not hesitate as to the reply which should be given to this question. *The Daily Telegraph* is no friend of Nonconformity, but in a recent article it has called attention to its remarkable development, and especially to the fact that it has advanced in culture and taste without the sacrifice of any spiritual force. Our own belief is that this unprejudiced witness is true. It is unhealthy and unwise to be continually inquiring as to the growth of our churches. We should be strong enough to do work and wait patiently for results. But this introspection is forced upon us by others. Our attention was first called to a discussion which has been going on about the supposed decay of Nonconformity by a short article in *The Guardian*. It is not editorial, but from the position given to it, it would seem to be the production of a valued correspondent. The writer, whose estimate seems to be based chiefly upon very insufficient data drawn from articles in *The British Weekly* and *The Christian World*, and to the statistics of the Methodist communities has reached some remarkable conclusions. "It appears certain that they (the Dissenting communities) are all, with the one striking

exception of the Salvation Army, either standing still or losing ground." "This decline appears to extend over two years. Up to that time, as the figures published in *The Guardian* twelve months ago conclusively show, Nonconformity, taken as a whole, was keeping pace in its increase with the growth of the population. Now, according to its own adherents, it is barely holding its own, while, according to the same authority, in England and Scotland the State Churches are increasing in number. How is this important change to be accounted for?" This is reducing the statistical argument to which some are so fond of referring, to something little short of an absurdity. If so recently as two years ago, Nonconformity was growing, there is no occasion for alarm as to any decline which has occurred since. Granted even that it is real of which we see, not the least reliable evidence, it proves nothing. Fluctuations there will always be in the history of religious communities, and to argue the existence of some permanent tendencies to decay from the losses of so short a period, shows such a want of wisdom and fairness as to suggest that the wish is father to the thought. A consciousness of this appears to have dawned on the writer himself, for he ends his article with a very sensible observation, "It is, however, too soon to dogmatize. We must wait and see whether the decrease be a passing phase of Nonconformity, be the beginning of a period of serious decline."

Had the writer given due weight to this wise caution at first, he might possibly have abstained from his unfriendly criticism altogether. It would be well, however, if the editors of Dissenting newspapers noted the uses to which their admissions, often all too candid and their statements often far too sweeping, are put by the defenders of the Establishment. *The British Weekly* has very temperately but firmly rebuked this wretched sectarianism, and, in a spirit of Christian wisdom, has insisted that "if religion wanes in the Nonconformist churches, it will wane in the Establishment." It was *The Record*, of all papers, which traversed this contention, and when *The British Weekly* replied to its statements of the prosperity of the Anglican

Church, that it was among the Ritualists, not the Evangelicals that this growth was to be found, did not hesitate to challenge a statement which, we are satisfied, nine out of every ten impartial men would pronounce indisputable. *The British Weekly* puts a plain question, "Does *The Record* believe that the Evangelicals are reviving and prospering in the Church of England? Does it believe that the Evangelicals are the growing party in that community?" The answer was disingenuous and delusive. We are informed that an Evangelical clergyman has shown very ably that "the truths contended for by the Evangelical party are working their way steadily, even among men never known as Evangelicals." Such a reply proves nothing, is simply evasive. We all know that there are Ritualist clergymen who preach the cardinal truths of the gospel, though they add to them so much of sacramentalism and sacerdotalism as to obscure their true character. Whether the congregations whom they attract are most in sympathy with the Divine truth or the human alloy we shall not undertake to determine here. But what *The British Weekly* suggested was that the Evangelical party is not growing, and that *The Record* does not distinctly deny. In truth, it is too manifest to deny. The drift from the Evangelical party in the Church is just as marked as that from Methodism to the Church, which was confessed at the recent Conference. It is a distinct drift to Churchism, and generally to Churchism of an advanced type. It is felt more or less through all sections of the Puritan camp, to use the expressive phrase of a friend. If the Evangelicals can contemplate this with complacency it is melancholy, for it means nothing less than the surrender of much for which their fathers most strenuously contended, and assuredly points to the extinction of the old Evangelical party in the Church. Far be it from us to undervalue the zeal and earnestness of numbers of the clergy, or to doubt that their efforts have been attended with great results. We can thank God for all who preach Christ, and who gather souls to Him, though they belong to another Christian Church, and even though their success may tell

against movements in which we are interested. The conversion of souls is of transcendently higher importance than religious equality, and even though a revival in the Anglican Church might give a longer lease to a system of sectarian ascendancy which we hold to be unjust, we should welcome it with all our hearts if the result was the recovery of souls from the power of sin and unbelief to simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to Him. But we cannot admit that the drawing of men away from Dissent to the Church, or from the Evangelical to the High Church party, is necessarily an extension of vital religion. On the contrary, it is more frequently due to the attractions of fashion, or to the greater freedom both as to doctrine and practice which is supposed to be enjoyed within the Establishment. We hear agnostics rejoicing over this drift, and not without reason. As one of them told us in an air of triumph, it shows that men care less about points of doctrine. Of course under such conditions there is a drift to a national Church, which is the Church of society and fashion, and adherence to which does not imply the profession of any definite religious conviction, but only the absence of any strong principle compelling a man to dissent.

Mr. Spurgeon is quoted, and will of course be quoted often, as a witness to the growth of heterodoxy, not to say Rationalism and unbelief among Dissenters, and it will be quietly taken for granted that many are drawn to the Establishment because of its loyalty to the faith of the gospel. Yet, strange to say, this increasing strength of the Establishment is said to be more marked in Scotland, where the Free Church barely holds its ground, while the Establishment boasts of its increase in strength and numbers. Will any one have the hardihood to contend that this is due to the superior orthodoxy of the Establishment? Only last month we had an opportunity of putting this to the test. Being in Edinburgh on a Sunday we worshipped in the morning at St. Giles' Church. The congregation was large, but both the service and the sermon were alien to the spirit of the old Scotch Presbyterianism. The service was a kind of liturgy, which contrasted very poorly

with the Book of Common Prayer. The imitation of some of the practices of the English Church, even to the reading of the lesson by a young man, attired in gown and hood, at a kind of lectern, placed at a little distance from the pulpit, did not strike us as dignified or impressive. But the sermon was the most melancholy part of the whole. The text was "God is Love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." It might have been chosen for the purpose of showing how possible it is to preach with taste and eloquence on the most glorious revelation of the Divine grace without introducing even a passing reference to the work of Redemption. It was a whittling away of the distinctive truths of the gospel. There were striking thoughts, expressed in chaste and eloquent language, as to the power of love in the common universal relations of life, and the chief object of the preacher apparently was to show that he who cultivated a loving spirit in these dwelt in God and God in him. There was nothing to remind men that they were sinners, and that God had shown His love to them in the "unspeakable gift." This was the preaching of a popular preacher in the great church of the Scotch Establishment. If it is by teaching of this sort that men are won from Dissent we cannot rejoice in it as an extension of Evangelical religion.

These attacks from outside might have been treated with indifference, but for the scathing criticism from within. Whatever be the ultimate effect, Mr. Spurgeon has certainly succeeded in creating an excitement which has extended far beyond Nonconformist circles. The enemies of Dissent everywhere are jubilant, and so far as they care to notice the movements of the religious world at all, this feeling will be shared by the enemies of the gospel. Of course it was right that it should be done if there were evidence of such a falling away from the faith as is outlined in Mr. Spurgeon's terrible down-grade. But the proof ought to be very clear and convincing before statements so startling and so calculated to confirm the views and encourage the hearts of aggressive unbelievers are given to the world.

Unbelievers are continually telling us that Christianity is effete, that the intellect of the age has outgrown its superstitions, that its work is done, and that thinking men, while seeking to retain its moral and social influence, have quietly renounced its theology. Mr. Spurgeon can now be adduced a witness in support of their contention. He does not adopt their inference that the gospel is about to vanish away, but they could desire no stronger testimony as to the facts on which they rest their forecast than he supplies, and certainly they could not wish for a witness of more authority. Had he been less honoured, had it been possible even to insinuate the presence of some unworthy motive, or could this gloomy diagnosis of the general state of Nonconformity be explained by any personal disappointment or failure the effect would not be so serious. But here is the most successful of Nonconformist ministers, and he testifies that even among the ministers and churches where the Evangelical faith has hitherto been supposed to be most living and powerful, it has very largely lost its hold. The conclusions reached by all who hate Dissent, whether for its ecclesiastical polity or for its Evangelical creed, are obvious enough. The one party invites us to see the consequences of revolt from the authority of the "Catholic Church," the other points to the failure of the old theology even among its most devoted adherents. Both alike appeal to Mr. Spurgeon, and many an earnest worker struggling boldly and manfully against difficulties of every kind will be confronted with the words of this great Christian teacher. If our friend could have seen one of the earliest letters we received on the subject from a young minister whose loyalty to the Master is as stainless as his own, and who is doing as true a work for Christ as himself, he might have doubted the wisdom of adding to the anxieties and difficulties which in an age like this are already sufficiently depressing. We know that there are numbers of our brethren of the same type, and it is no light matter that their discouragements should be so gratuitously increased. Every one is ready to criticize the minister. If there is want of success it is attributed to him. Though a spirit of

worldliness and self-indulgence is abroad, against which it is very hard to contend, the responsibility for any lack of spirituality in the Church or of conversions from the world must be fastened on him. Theorists of all varieties of opinion are for ever ventilating their patent plans for the extension of religion, greatly to the hindrance of quiet, sober work ; but for the result of this restless craving for sensationalism the minister who has mourned over it in secret, and who has been attacked for any check he has sought to put upon its extravagance, must be held accountable. He is doing his best to meet the demands of an exacting age, the very conditions of which seem hardly to be understood by some who undertake to be his critics. He is expected to have constant freshness in his mode of presenting truth, and to the measure of his power he endeavours to satisfy the requirement with the result, that of those who make it with most urgency, there will be some ready to complain if his teaching show but the appearance of deflection from the old paths. He has to address numbers who have drunk in the flippant spirit of a press, which seems to find a pleasure in treating earnest Christian faith as a sign of weakness, and who are anxious to earn for themselves a cheap reputation for intellectual power, by assuming an attitude of lofty condescension towards those who are bound by the trammels from which they have escaped. He has a multitude of counsellors in the pew and in the press, but, unfortunately for him, their voices are utterly discordant. On one side he is told that the world wants everything old ; on the other, that its one craving is for novelty, and he has to satisfy these conflicting advisers. What with those who are inside their borders—the free lances who are for ever declaiming against churches and parsons, for whom they create new difficulties by their own indiscretions ; the champions of all kinds of reform who insist that ministers must unite their own pet scheme with the preaching of the gospel if they are to achieve success ; the sensationalists who are never easy unless there is some new excitement, and the generation of grumblers generally, who never have been wanting, and are not likely ever to cease from the earth—

and the enemies or competitors outside—the members of other and too often rival Churches, enemies of Nonconformity as much because it is a power for liberty and righteousness as because of its religious character, and unbelievers or Agnostics generally—the task of Nonconformist ministers is sufficiently arduous and painful. A man, and especially a young man, who has to face such difficulties, should be regarded with sympathy, not with suspicion and distrust. It is hard, if to all his other troubles should be added a candid friend to suggest to the world that, in all probability, he is a heretic, who is undermining the faith, or a worldling who finds his pleasure in theatres or card playing.

We propose to ourselves to examine in detail Mr. Spurgeon's allegations in our next number. The opening article of the number was in type before we saw his criticism, and it expresses our view as to the general features of the case. Before speaking of the particular charges against our ministers and churches, we thought it right to inquire as to the views of some representative men among us. The opinions of some of them we publish this month, and others will follow with editorial comments on the whole. The questions are too grave to be lightly dismissed. One of our most esteemed correspondents recommended that we should preserve a dignified silence, and there was something to be said for this course. But there is more than our denominational honour involved in the matter. If the subject be treated in a Christian temper, with the recollection (as *The British Weekly* has so properly reminded us all) that the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians is as much inspired as any other part of the Bible, out of this evil we may still find means of good. No doubt there are lessons which we need to learn, and it will be happy both for ministers and Churches if even criticisms, which they feel to be unfair, lead to serious "searchings of heart," out of which may grow greater earnestness of purpose and wisdom of method.

MR. SPURGEON'S "DOWN-GRADE"—OPINIONS OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS.*

REV. J. C. HARRISON.

ON the question generally, I can only say that there are some few men, still known as Congregational ministers, who do not scruple to express their disbelief in certain great doctrines, at least in the form in which they are held by our churches. They would fain have the world suppose that they are the leaders of thought amongst us, and are exerting a far stronger influence than they actually do. I fancy they are a small minority, and that the vast majority of our ministers are quietly preaching the old gospel with unwavering faithfulness. But whilst I say this, I acknowledge how difficult it is to speak for three or four thousand men, and as many churches.

Instead of venturing to judge others and to pronounce a general sentence, I feel that our only wise course is to preach the truth with all earnestness, and to live it with all fidelity. It would be easy to go back to the past and recriminate; but that would be to embitter a controversy which is sure to provoke irritation enough without. Vague, general accusations against a large body of men are most unfair. How any person who has the smallest acquaintance with the limitedness of his own knowledge can bring them, I cannot understand. Surely he is in great danger of "grieving the Holy Spirit of God."

That I have been again and again distressed to hear the avowal of opinions which appeared to me inconsistent with the old faith, I at once grant. But I can truly say that in my vacations and my visits to country places I have been delighted at the fulness of Evangelical truth which has been preached, and at the jealousy for the maintenance of the old gospel which has been shown.

REV. H. R. REYNOLDS, D.D.,

Principal of Cheshunt College.

PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER in his recent work on "The Science of Thought" calls "the whole history of Philosophy from Thales to Hegel . . . one constant protest of new thought and new language, against old thought and old language."

What he says of the history of philosophy is equally true of the history of theology. The chief religious conflicts which have been the sorrow of Christian hearts and the agony of holy seers, which have called out the enterprise of reformers, and sharpened the weapons of persecutors, have often turned on the meanings they could agree to give to certain words. Perhaps no solitary word in any language ever

* These are answers to a letter calling attention to the "down-grade," and asking my correspondent to give the results of his own observation—1. As to existence of a wide-spread departure from the Evangelical faith among Congregational ministers. 2. As to any special hindrances to the spiritual progress of the Churches.—EDITOR.

suggested precisely the same mental concept to any two persons. Differences, more or less subtle, prevail with reference to the *names* of the simplest realities outside or within our consciousness. Surely the gravest divergences must inevitably arise when we use such terms as 'force' or 'motion,' 'person' or 'substance,' 'chaos' or 'cosmos,' 'nature' or 'supernature,' 'soul' or 'spirit,' 'creation' or 'redemption,' 'church' or 'state.' We become confused and sometimes indignant, when a philosophical or theological opponent persists in adding to a familiar term, ideas which appear to us from long usage to be incompatible with it.

It would be worth while to follow the history of such terms as unity or Trinity, inspiration or revelation, justification, regeneration or atonement through some of these acute crises.

The period of transition in the use of words is perilous to peace, but the hatchet is buried when a full adjustment has taken place, and men understand the difference that has arisen between them.

Christian people are suffering from this inevitable inconvenience at the present time. We on all sides are grasping at some words, which those who differ from us are endeavouring to monopolize and to impound, and we are also throwing away other and precious words which have become obnoxious.

If two theologians in their use of the term "atonement" find that one is limiting its meaning to the solution of the antithesis between Eternal Justice and Infinite Mercy, and that another while not denying a solution of this mystery keeps the *word* atonement for the reconciliation of man to the will of God—great acerbity may follow, for the first may charge the second with irreverence and disloyalty to God, and the second may charge the first with ignoring the moral responsibility of man,—while the two, in their inmost nature and reason, may be thinking identical thoughts about the work of Christ. But that is not the whole of the difference, and there is more than verbal discrepancy in the noise of battle rolling through the world.

Religion and the Church are surrounded by forces positively hostile. The Free Churches and the Established Churches, imperfectly organized Independency, elaborately organized Methodism, and infallible Vaticanism are equally conscious of the fact, that the scientific method and spirit are more comprehensive and aggressive than ever. Science offers not only to expound phenomena, but in various ways boasts that it can interpret all the facts of religious experience. There is a 'science' of religion, as well as a 'science' of molecules. The old doctrine of the uniformities of nature has practically vanished in favour of a universal evolution along certain lines, under the impulse of an unknown and unknowable Energy, which though it has evolved human consciousness is itself impersonal and unconscious, can neither love nor choose, nor anticipate, nor know the goal of the universe. Religion is face to face with this solution of our problems, and must be content to hear more and more the murmur and thunder of these

deathly contentions. Moreover the word 'evolution,' *entwicklung*, is open to the same inevitable double construction. Some loudly proclaim it to be equivalent to this, that the universe at any one moment of its existence contains and always has contained within itself all the conditions and causes of what will happen in the next moment, whether that be the conglobation of a world, or the demolition of a sun, the beginning of molecules or the commencement of life, the appearance of man or the birth of any of the greatest of men, the history of a religion or the conversion of a soul. To others the epochal changes, produced by certain apparent breaks in the continuity of events, reveal the special Presence and Intention, and guiding Force of One who is the Supreme "Evolver," who is infinitely greater than all His handiwork and operating in it all.

Others, again, still using the word *Evolution*, find the process entirely unthinkable unless at every moment of time and every point in space, between every two phenomena whatever, they may further hold the Presence and Providence and Purpose of the Living God, ONE who can alone in fulness of meaning say I AM, one who is the most personal of all personalities.

With the first of these connotations, the Supernatural and the Divine evaporate—with the third of them every event perilously approaches the supernatural and becomes revelation of the Divine will. The second traces it may be everywhere the Divine purpose, but distinctly recognizes at great epochs the unveiling of the Divine Character, and sees God coming out of His place, to originate, to redeem, to correct, to regenerate, to save the free will of man.

We cannot hide from view that there is a war to the knife going on between those who—alike under cover of these famous terms—do contend for, and who do bitterly repudiate the supernatural order. The battle rages all along the line of the Divine Manifestation, alike in the region of literature and science, and in the domain of history and morals. There is no position in theology or philosophy which is not assailed. The contest is especially severe, because notwithstanding some adverse skirmishes, victory is being intellectually declared for the reality of the Supernatural in a thousand fields of strife. Science shrinks from the assertion of the eternity of the cosmos, it *must* and yet it *cannot* bridge the chasm between nothing and something. Science confesses it has no light yet on the origin of *life*. It is in hopeless confusion about the *origin* of man. And notwithstanding all attempts to explain the purely human origin of the faith of Israel, or of the beginning of Christianity, these stupendous facts are irreducible by the 'laws' of human nature. Consequently some of the highest intelligences of the age are loud in their confession "Here at least, if nowhere else, is the finger of God."

The methods of assault upon the faith of Christ have been varied and mutually destructive. The old rationalism was shattered by the mythical hypothesis, the "myths" of Strauss overwhelmed by the "ten-

dencies" of Baur, the ingenious speculations and impracticable dates of Baur have been modified out of the field by his own disciples. The four Gospels, as well as the four great Epistles have risen up unharmed out of the explosion of the powder factories of their opponents. Comte is utterly repudiated by Huxley, and the conflict between Spencer and Harrison helps to clear the air of the smoke.

We, and all churches and Christian people who know anything of the strife, are suffering from the noise of battle, and are at times ill at ease.

There is a natural desire to state our hold upon the supernatural order in language which will stand the fire of skilled opponents. New methods of assault always evoke new appliances for defence. It is amusing and sad to see how the claim to infallibility imposes upon people; but it will be well for us not to be imposed upon by the supposed infallibility of science. The theories, the classifications, the nomenclature of science disappear like dissolving views. It is hard to believe that the last thing suggested is the final truth, or the unalterable method in the pursuit of reality.

The question of supreme interest for us to ask at the present moment is this: Have the Congregationalists yielded before the storm? Have they ceased to bear witness to the central reality, to the veritable Deity of the Son of God, who was incarnate by the Spirit of God in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have they hesitated to affirm the manifestation of Eternal Righteousness as well as Infinite Love in the sacrificial death of the Lord of Glory? Have they ceased to proclaim repentance and remission of sins? Have they divorced pardon and holiness, or inverted the evangelic order of these states? Do they cease to proclaim the need of regeneration? There is not any evidence whatever of such change.

Though Calvinism is often denounced by some conspicuous men, does not the great dictum of Augustine, *nihil bonum sine gratia*, hold its ground? Though some affect in a patronizing fashion to speak with pathetic interest of "the old book" (as others might speak of "the old arm-chair"), is not the heart of our people sound, not simply as to its unrivalled literary interest and magnificent range of thought, but as to its being the most certain voice of God and the greatest witness to the reality of the kingdom of God, and the power of grace, the noblest and surest guide to conduct? and that life and immortality come forth into the light that shines from it?

Doubtless there are a few who, under shelter of the theory of evolution, are vaguely predicting the speedy disintegration of all Evangelical doctrines, and appear to fancy that their own emasculated Christianity will rise and ride on the crest of the wave which will bury all antecedent forms. One thing is, however, certain, that if the "natural" triumph in some minds over "the supernatural," the Fatherhood and Love of God will be lost to them before the awful conviction of His righteousness. If the purely natural order prevails to obscure for any the expression of blended judgment and mercy in the sacrifice of

Christ, they will lose hope before they lose fear. Fate will triumph in their minds over their sense of freedom, and such souls will tremble bewildered on the edge of a precipice from which they may see universal laws, but no everlasting arms.

This, alas! will be the case with some, but that it is to be the history of Congregational Churches I believe to be absolutely impossible. "Impossible," *i.e.*, without utterly abolishing Congregationalism. The pulsation of its heart and its nervous energy will collapse directly that its faith in the supernatural order wavers. I am delighted to find everywhere signs of a deeper and more intense craving after the Divine life, a hunger after righteousness, a belief in the love of God, and deepening desires after the triumph and revelation of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ to men. It is deeply to be deplored if the secular aspects, the human bearing of the Divine life, the practical advantages of the gospel, be substituted for the sublime realities out of which all these things spring. Cut flowers soon wither. Unfed streams soon dry up in the hot sun. *Laws* of living are of little use to starving men. Neither evolution nor legislation can comfort a condemned criminal, and our congregations always contain those who are dying for want of living bread and of the river of God, and of the grounds and assurance of pardon.

Perhaps some preachers who conspicuously keep to the human, natural, ethical, formal aspects of the gospel, do so under the vain impression that the divine, supernatural, spiritual, transcendental realities have been over-insisted on to the exclusion of their practical issues. If the present anxiety in the hearts of some should banish such impressions, more good than harm will be done by the momentary panic.

Sentiments, whether right or wrong, if uttered because such are fashionable and current in a particular clique, soon become worthless and worse than dead. The lifeless sentimentality of a de-spiritualized Christianity, the heartlessly uttered sing-song about self-denial in lieu of the reasons for all self-sacrifice in the sacrificial death of the Son of God, is the most offensive cant of all.

The present anxiety in some minds is by no means abnormal. My own recollection of similar alarms on various occasions is very vivid. All reading of Church history assures us that scarcely a generation has passed without the cry of fear, lest by some concession all should be endangered; but the great lines and curves of Christian faith have nevertheless gone steadily forward, and have been maintained by larger and larger numbers of faithful witnesses. An interesting inquiry would be whether the statement of the essential doctrines of the gospel have ever in their whole career made such curves as science and philosophy have taken even in our own century. It is more than possible that the next great swing of the pendulum will bring the whole body of eager scientists into such thrilling contact with unsolved mystery, that a perfectly new standpoint will be supplied for their contemplation of the great mystery of godliness, and a unanimous conviction arise that here is "the true God and eternal life."

REV. HENRY ALLON, D.D.

I FEEL that I can answer your questions only very vaguely and superficially. I am not sure that any one can answer them otherwise. A generalization in the shape of a dogmatic judgment demands so wide a range of knowledge, and of local and individual conditions, and is necessarily so affected by the circumstances, the experiences, and the idiosyncrasies of him who ventures upon it, that it can scarcely assume to be more than an impression, to be taken for what it is worth.

I am, moreover, ignorant of the precise occasion of your inquiries, as I have been away from England for some weeks, and may therefore give answers to them that are in a large degree irrelevant.

In judging of the tendency of an age, and especially of the age of which we ourselves form a part, one has to discriminate and analyze innumerable and subtle forms of belief and unbelief. In every age there are unbelievers outside the pale of Christianity, and misbelievers within it—even amongst the most godly; and sometimes, as is seen throughout Christian history, grave forms of error are generated by morbid fear and by ignorant affection, as well as by irreverent speculations. Some of the most injurious influences that have wrought in all ages, both in Christian theology and in Christian life, have been the stolid dogmas of the hyper-orthodox: the ultra-conservative, in every domain of thought and life, is ever the most destructive radical. I, for one, fear the weak arguments of ignorant orthodoxy more than I do the strong assaults of learned scepticism. Who shall appraise with anything approaching accuracy the various elements of the theological thought of his day, much less those of former days? Who can free himself from the influence of his own individual traditions and surroundings? The cry of heterodox tendencies is no new alarm. In my own student days every meeting of the Congregational Union used to ring with it. Among Fathers in the ministry whom we revered then and revere still, it was far more urgent than it is now. It is the natural conservatism of advancing years. We cling to our own first moulds and methods. In business as well as in theology, old men, by the conservative excellencies of their early years, may perpetuate old methods until they are utterly dislocated from the advancing thought and ways of their day. Often the best thing that could befall the business firm, or the church, would be for its honoured head to be taken away; he over-bears young life and disallows new methods. "The old order changeth yielding place to new." For myself I have a constant fear of an over-insistence upon the conceptions and methods in which I was cradled.

Do we really believe that "God has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word"? Has not every generation changed the methods and modes of apprehension of its predecessors? Is there a single primary doctrine of Christianity, the *apprehension* of which has not been continually modified? Notably it is so with the atonement; while the fundamental fact that we are reconciled to God through

the death of the Cross has been continuously held, the governmental and other theories which professed to explain the fact—that is, the mere human apprehensions of the divinely revealed fact—have been changed a hundred times, and we have certainly not attained to absolute and final knowledge yet. Just as the unchanging facts of physical nature are ever revealing new truths and apprehensions to the scientific student, so will the unchanging facts of Divine revelation to the theological student, and yet men are as confidently as ever writing “Finis” upon their systems of theology. We Free Churchmen, at any rate, do not hold that the creeds of the fourth or of the sixteenth century, of Athanasius or of Calvin, are ultimate forms of theological thought. We maintain rightly that theology also is a progressive science, and that our children will conceive of God and Christ and salvation more largely, spiritually, and truly, than we do; just as we do in comparison with our forefathers. When advancing theological science wrenches us away from our old moorings timid souls and narrow dogmatists are full of alarm, as Mary was when she did not find the body of her Lord; as in my boyhood good men were at the “infidel science” of geology; as good men were in the times of Sir Isaac Newton and Galileo. Can any greater service to theology be rendered than to discredit its erroneous, narrow, and dishonouring interpretations? The truth of Christ remains, but men see it more and more.

On the whole, my impression is that so far from there being, compared with past generations, a tendency in our own to depart from fundamental evangelical faiths, these are more widely and firmly held than ever they were. The essential Divinity of Jesus Christ, and His atoning sacrifice for human sin are, I believe, maintained, not it may be by the theological arguments of former generations, but as the fundamental principles and inspirations of religious life, much more extensively and conclusively than ever before. One thinks of the infidelity of Bishop Butler’s day, and of the theological disquietude and uncertainty of the early part of this century, and one “thanks God and takes courage.”

I do not think that the hindrances to spiritual progress in the churches are specially or characteristically theological. Such hindrances, of course, there are, as there always have been; and here again it is difficult to speak *comparatively*. Special hindrances will always spring out of special forms of thought, and have to be specially contended with, but I think they are not so strong and deterrent, either within the Church or without it, as they were in my own early days, and there are, of course, the common sinful passions of human nature now as always strong. If I may venture to suggest what I think is chiefly characteristic of our present religious life, I would say that we suffer from “the faults of our virtues.” The religion of Jesus Christ is felt to cover much more of human life than it did—a broader domain is included in its interest, and is claimed for Christ, as is seen in the agencies of all our Evangelical missions. Things

then altogether disallowed are now simply to be now sanctified. Asceticism has been discredited in practical Christian life, and many things are felt to be both lawful and expedient in social life that fifty years ago were interdicted as sinful. In this we must rejoice, even though incidental evils result, "the end does not justify the means," even in the culture of Christian life. The ascetic distinctions between "the world" and "the church" are lessened, the apprehension of the Church itself is different, the cultus of Church life is different. Every measure of liberty is a corresponding possibility of licentiousness; and the incidental effect has possibly been a greater worldliness and unfaithfulness to Christian and to Church life. Well, the remedy is not a re-enactment of sumptuary laws, but a more potent application and appeal of spiritual forces. The free life of Christian men must be more fully won and inspired for Christ, and the world must feel the mighty power of spontaneous holiness and love. We piningly shrink from mere spiritual ways, and clamour for legislative ways. Emancipation from theological creeds, again, gives occasion for lawless speculation. This condition also we must accept; rejoice in the freedom, and control and sanctify it by the simple forces of moral and spiritual truth. I must not dwell on the positive indications of the comparative fidelity and consecration of our own day, the abounding liberality, the Christian ingenuities, the personal service of our churches. Should these be ignored? Are they not cheering indications of the widespread life and power of Christ? I dare not attempt a comparison between the distinctive evangelical agencies of the last century of revival and the distinctive agencies of our own manifold religious life. Should not the latter count largely in comparative estimates? While keenly apprehensive and prayerfully concerned about the characteristic evils of our own church life, we are, I think, neither believing nor just in saying that "the former days were better than these."

REV. H. ARNOLD THOMAS.

I SELDOM hear my brethren preach and am thus precluded, if there were no other reason, from offering any criticism on the character of their preaching. But judging, as one may, by what I read, and hear, and am able indirectly to gather, I venture to hope that Christianity has never been preached with greater sympathy, discernment, and fulness, than at the present time. No doubt, the word "Evangelical" may be so defined as to make room for the complaint that there is less Evangelicalism in our pulpits than formerly. But I see no reason at all to suppose that our ministers care less to understand, or to declare to men, and urge upon their hearts and consciences, what is essential and characteristic in the gospel of Christ. Certainly, there are points in regard to which they feel less confident than their fathers did, and I fancy there is a deeper sense of the vastness, and manysidedness of

truth, and of the mystery belonging to all spiritual realities, and therefore a better understanding of the difficulty of formulating doctrine with precision, and of the necessary imperfections of the theological systems in vogue in any of the schools. But I should be sorry to think, and I do not think, that Christ is less loved, less honoured, less believed in, than in the past, and I am not anxious so long as our ministers and churches are loyal at heart in their allegiance to Him. There is much faithlessness, to my mind, in many of our fears.

REV. ALEXANDER HANNAY, D.D.

My perusal of the "down-grade" articles in *The Sword and Trowel* filled me with sorrow and amazement. I have for many years held Mr. Spurgeon in the highest esteem for the splendid service he has rendered to his generation as a preacher of the gospel, and for the evidence which his general conduct afforded that his great popularity had not corrupted the Christian simplicity of his life. It has surely been given to very few men to carry so full a cup as his with so steady a hand. Nor does the surprise I have felt in reading the charges he brings against the two great Congregational bodies of departure from their traditional standards of faith and godliness, blind me to the worthiness of the motives and the earnestness of feeling by which he is actuated; though I confess to some perplexity when I find that his most sweeping indictment relates to that one of the two bodies of which he knows the least.

It is clear, indeed, that Mr. Spurgeon's purity of motive has not been sufficient to keep him from adopting a method in dealing with his brethren which must be largely mischievous. He has become their accuser when he might have been their guide and helper. Theological controversy has not always been waged in a spirit becoming the Christian fellowship; but the good rule, whatever defects of manner and temper there may have been in its observance, has been to meet erring brethren with argument and persuasion. Their error has been formulated, if possible in their own words, and its inconsistency with Scripture, and with truths most surely believed, demonstrated. This rational method—due alike to the truth and to the Christian brotherhood—has checked the growth of many heresies, and has often converted that which threatened to divide, into an occasion of closer and more cordial communion. But Mr. Spurgeon has adopted a method of his own. He has been led to believe that certain ministers and certain churches within the pale of the Congregational and Baptist denominations have ceased to be Evangelical in faith and testimony. He cannot be silent on the subject. He must strike for the truth. Good; but with what weapon—argument or denunciation? Strike, but at whom—the erring brethren, or the entire community of churches whose name they happen to bear? Mr. Spurgeon has chosen the latter course—a

course which I respectfully submit is in no way helpful to the truth, but is well fitted to alarm timid souls and to create vulgar prejudice. The question which Mr. Spurgeon has raised, and has put on the lips of some anxious, many unthinking, and not a few unscrupulous persons is, not whether this or that view of gospel doctrine is scriptural, but whether it is not the fact that the ministry of the Congregational and Baptist bodies is largely ceasing to be Evangelical. This I venture to say is an abuse—an unintentional abuse no doubt—but not the less an abuse, on Mr. Spurgeon's part, of the great influence which his eminence as a preacher has given him; and it can hardly fail to lead to restlessness in the churches, and to unhealthy inquisitions by which the hands of many faithful pastors will be weakened.

Mr. Spurgeon is not the man to make such grave allegations as his articles contain without evidence which convinces him of their truth; but it is no violent supposition that he may be deceived as to the real value of much of that evidence. It is notorious that a little shrewd cross-questioning often changes the complexion, and indeed entirely reverses the effect of testimony, even when that testimony is given on oath and in good faith. Under such a process it is not improbable that much of the evidence on which Mr. Spurgeon relies would shrink into insignificance.

I am disposed to think it would, because my somewhat extensive knowledge of the Congregational body has revealed to me no such state of things as Mr. Spurgeon deplors and denounces. My office brings me into habitual contact and frequent confidential communication with the ministers of the body in all parts of England and Wales. During the last seventeen years I have preached I believe in every county of England, occupying different pulpits at the rate of say thirty per annum, and have freely mixed with the ministers and representative members of the churches at Union and County Association meetings. If there had been any such defection as Mr. Spurgeon and his informants confidentially affirm, it could not have escaped my observation. That the type of doctrine which underlies Mr. Spurgeon's own preaching is not held by the greater number of Congregational ministers, I frankly admit; that many interpretations of Scripture which were relied upon by the preachers of the last generation, and some forms of presenting the gospel which they used with great power, are not now heard in any but a very small number of Congregational pulpits cannot be questioned. But this is not necessarily defection: it may be progress. The world is not standing still. If it may not be said that the Spirit of God has given to this generation a new word, He has at least poured fresh light on the old word; and howsoever, under this process, doctrinal forms and methods of pulpit ministration may have changed, no charge of departure from the Evangelical faith can be made good against a minister who affirms, and in his teaching makes manifest, his faith in "the incarnation, the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection, His ascension and mediatorial

reign, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of men." Taking the Congregational ministry as a whole, I believe without reserve, that it holds these spiritual facts and doctrines in the grasp of an intelligent and masculine faith. That in the searching times through which we have been passing a few have drifted from their moorings is notorious, but the number is fractional, and they have not been able to find a resting-place in the ministry of our churches. A few have been bewildered for a time, but patient waiting upon God on their own part and a patient dealing with them on the part of their brethren have restored to them calm and strong faith. This unsettlement is not distinctive of the Congregational ministry nor peculiar to this generation; and, so far as I know, it is a libel on the Congregational Churches and ministry to assert that it is characteristic of their present state. I believe it less affects them than it did ten years ago. It is true that many ministers mourn the comparative unfruitfulness of their ministry, but that speaks of their faith, not of their want of faith. It may be that the common level of pulpit power is not high, but there are many, I believe a daily increasing number, who are crying to God for revival both in the fellowship of the churches and in the ministrations of the pulpit. If Mr. Spurgeon and his friends would seek closer and more confiding fellowship with their brethren, instead of standing aloof as censors, much of what has caused them solicitude and provoked their jealousy would probably disappear.

REV. ALEXANDER MACKENNAL, D.D.,

Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

I FEEL some difficulty in answering your questions. I cannot give much time to thought over them, for I am beginning to meditate on my October address. You will, therefore, understand that I am giving you my passing opinion; that will be insufficient, but it will not be lightly uttered; and you can use my name or not as you like.

I do not think our churches or ministers have largely "departed from" the Evangelical faith. I think they are sincerely attached to it. But the difficulties in the way of a spiritual belief at all are largely felt by them; and while the Evangelical doctrine is spiritual as well as ethical—spiritual first and chiefly, and ethical derivatively—they are stronger on the ethical side than the spiritual. That might look like love of legalism or mere moral preaching. I am convinced it is no such thing. I have been touched, again and again, with the welcome given to marked Evangelical teaching—or testimony—by ministers and churches that would be unable to bear the testimony themselves. Of course, there is a cold intellectual and dogmatically secular element both in our churches and ministry; but it is not the prevalent element, it is quite exceptional. The widespread hesitancy

to speak a markedly spiritual language veils longing and expectancy, and not repugnance.

Of course, I use the word *Evangelical* in a broad sense. I do not think the forensic idea of justification, *e.g.*, would be welcome. But I am persuaded that our people generally regard Christ as the medium of the forgiveness of their sins, and rest on Him with a faith which they cannot utter.

I think that the relative place occupied by special doctrines in the Evangelical sentiment of our churches is altered; that life in Christ is now the note of that sentiment as distinctly as justification through Christ was. But it does not need much exposition to show that when people are sound on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, they will not be radically defective about the atonement.

It would be insincere if I affected to believe that we had a universal, or even largely diffused, vigorous preaching of Evangelical doctrine; but again I say this is not out of repugnance to it as "*Evangelical*," but because of the difficulty of "*faith*." I believe that the heart of the denomination is sound; that there is a longing for a stronger faith, and a distinct conviction that that stronger faith will come through a re-awakening of Evangelical piety.

As to your second question—"What are the hindrances to spiritual prosperity in our churches?" I cannot answer.

Luxury, indolence, an easy temper, superficiality, excitability, "*short culture*"—all these and other causes are at work among us. But under all is want of faith. A strong spiritual teaching, full of direct vision, well-reasoned, the reasoning, however, proceeding from conviction and not up to it, would, I believe, set many things right.

REV. ERIC A. LAWRENCE, HALIFAX.

1. BEFORE we can determine, or even form any judgment on the question, whether there are evidences of departure from the evangelical faith on the part of the ministers of any denomination, it is essential that we should understand quite clearly what is meant by the "*Evangelical Faith*." In ecclesiastical classification the term "*evangelical*" seems to have been appropriated by the ultra-orthodox school of religious thought, and it has been commonly used to designate that school.

Using the expression "*Evangelical Faith*" in this traditional and acquired sense, I do certainly think that our ministers *are* departing from it; and I am careful myself not to use or to allow the term "*Evangelical*" as descriptive of my own position and convictions. It seems to me impossible to deny that in the sense Mr. Spurgeon attaches to the word (for in his view Calvinism and Evangelicalism are hardly to be distinguished), we have ceased to be Evangelicals.

But I earnestly dispute the right of that section of the Church which has been commonly known as "Evangelical" to the designation they have chosen and received; and, in the strict meaning of the word, I believe that our ministers are emphatically and increasingly Evangelical: by which I mean that they preach Christ as God manifest in the flesh, as the living Friend and Saviour of man, as the "one foundation," and the one sure hope of glory. They have felt, I think, what Rothe said, that "our task is to set aside the so-called 'Christian religion,' and to restore Jesus Christ in its place."

2. I believe the great obstacle to that spiritual prosperity in our Churches which we all desire to see is the pressure of anxiety occasioned by the battle of life; the keen competition that rules in the commercial world, in consequence of all which every man's hand is against his brother, and "the devil take the hindmost" becomes the generally accepted maxim. All these things tend to enlarge the area of the "thorny ground."

THE POLICY OF "THOROUGH."

The startling events and ghastly tragedies in Ireland, and the exciting debates in Parliament, which have disturbed the normal quiet of a month usually given up by politicians to rest and recreation, have more than a mere ephemeral interest. They are something more than mere incidents in our common political strife; they are the first movements in what is really civil war, and their full consequences it is not easy to measure. Their most serious aspect has not yet been fully realized. Possibly their bearing on Ireland may be understood, but the influence which the high-handed policy of the Government must, if persisted in, ultimately exert upon English liberty and English institutions, is even now hardly perceived. There is a pleasant persuasion which accords with the Conservative optimism of the English character—that freedom is too securely established to be successfully assailed or undermined. It is, indeed, one evidence of the unreality of the Union, and of the hollowness of the pretext that Ireland is to be governed on the same principles as England, that the mutilation of Irish liberties is contemplated with perfect equanimity, and without even a misgiving that the same

measure may some day be applied to this country. And certainly, when we look at the composition of the present Government, it does seem somewhat ridiculous to talk of English liberty being menaced. The idea of Mr. W. H. Smith heading an attack upon the rights which were wrested from the proud aristocracy of the past is really a trifle too ludicrous, even though he have the support of Mr. Goschen and Mr. Balfour. But it is just this easy confidence which is the cause of danger. We have been so accustomed to progress, that we are ready to believe that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and yet more abundant," and so to dismiss even rational anxiety. Yet already the right of free speech, both in and out of Parliament, has been seriously curtailed for the sake of putting down Irish Nationalists; and the question naturally suggests itself—if agitation is suppressed in Ireland, how long will it be tolerated in England? The answer may be that England can take care of itself, and probably it may prove true. But that is surely no reason why we should help to multiply obstacles to our own advance. If there is any sincerity in the talk about the Union, we are precluded from meting out one measure to Ireland and another to England; and for ourselves we consider it as fortunate, rather than otherwise, that circumstances make it tolerably certain that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again.

The gravity of the issues which are involved in this Irish controversy makes it of the highest importance that the events of the last month, which show that the struggle has passed into an acute crisis, should be dealt with in a calm and dispassionate manner. There is much to provoke indignation, but anger will contribute nothing to the settlement of the problem. The temptation to extreme and even violent procedure may to some be very strong, but such action is bad in itself, and would profit only those who, regardless of everything beside, are bent on crushing the national aspirations of Ireland. The case of the Liberal Opposition will be all the stronger the more temperately it is stated, and their success will be the more speedy and the

more certain the greater the self-restraint shown in its advocacy. There is the more reason for such a course of action, because the case is so strong in itself that it needs no embellishment.

Our contention is that the policy which the Government have pursued towards the Irish during the last session, at the instigation of certain metropolitan journals, and with the support of Lord Hartington and his followers, has been such as to render a true Union of the two peoples more hopeless than ever, and that in the attempt to carry out what they are pleased to describe as firm government in Ireland they are goading the Irish people to rebellion and violence. They are thus sacrificing the safeguards of liberty in both countries for the purpose of trampling out the disaffection and disorder which a wiser and more righteous course of action would have prevented. The accession of Mr. Balfour to office, and perhaps we ought also to add the introduction of Mr. Goschen to the Cabinet, mark the beginning of this evil time, and may possibly have had to do with the inception of its high-handed and aggressive action. We should have said that a more unhappy choice for the Irish Secretaryship than that of Mr. Balfour could not have been made if there were not behind him the darker form of Col. King-Harman, who we are told is regarded by some Tories as the ideal Irish Secretary. Of men who were deemed eligible, however, Mr. Balfour was the worst. He would hardly have been selected at all had he not been the nephew of his uncle, and in committing to him so responsible and difficult a task, Lord Salisbury has shown his incapacity to learn the lesson of the Phaethon myth. Ignorant of Irish wants, and without a particle of sympathy with Irish feelings and desires, cynical and supercilious, arbitrary and hard, he was one of the last who ought to have been entrusted with the management of a people remarkably sensitive to kindness, but at the same time just as ready to resent injustice, and, above all, injustice accompanied with insult. Mr. Balfour has not even the one quality which might have done something to counter-

balance these defects. He has not the strength which would make him feared. His cowardly shrinking from that ordeal of question-time which his predecessors had manfully faced, though they well-nigh broke down under the strain, and the pitiful evasion to which he has again and again had recourse, are signs of weakness. Under similar conditions Mr. Forster would have commanded respect even from his bitterest antagonists, whereas Mr. Balfour excites only hatred and contempt. He has developed from point to point until, during the closing week of the session, his deportment has been that of the arrogant minister of some continental despot. "If I have my way," he exclaimed on one occasion, in a tone which would have been unbecoming in Mr. Gladstone, and which Mr. Gladstone would certainly never have adopted. Even a minister under a continental government is not supposed to have "my way" except he be a Bismarck. It may seem a slight matter, perhaps be regarded as a fault in expression, but it is much more than this, but a fault in temper, and one which has mainly to do with the unhappy experiences of the session. It was indeed an evil hour for the Government which deprived them of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who was a high-minded statesman, and left them in his stead a politician who in his Irish action does not seem to have risen above the level of Alderman Cute, and sums up everything in the determination to put Ireland down.

Whatever Mr. Balfour be, however, he may be regarded as representing his uncle's mind. He is the agent for the carrying out of Lord Salisbury's avowed desire to treat Ireland to twenty years of firm government. The Coercion Bill was the initial step. It was introduced in contempt of the positive pledges given at the general election, and in order to escape this reproach was defended by a disingenuous contention that it was intended solely for the suppression of crime. Events have very speedily exposed the hollowness of this plea. But even the preliminary discussions were sufficient to reveal the temper of the combined "Unionist" party. *The Times* was the chief

instrument in doing what was necessary to secure the passing of the Bill which has the evil distinction of being the most uncalled-for measure of Coercion which has ever been passed. The comparison between its provisions and those of the Act of 1882 was eminently delusive, since it left out of account the difference of the circumstances under which they were passed. In 1882 we were in the presence of a lawless disorder which culminated in the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, one of the most atrocious in the record of Irish crimes. When the present Crimes Bill was introduced Mr. Balfour was without a case, and *The Times* sought to supply the deficiency by its papers on "Parnellism and Crime," leading up to the accusation of Mr. Parnell himself. The conduct of the majority, and especially of Lord Hartington, in refusing a Parliamentary inquiry into these terrible accusations, is one of the darkest features in the history of a bad session. It is only necessary to reverse the case, or to put an "A B" case, to understand what the verdict of posterity will be on the transaction. Suppose Lord Hartington had been the accused, would there have been any hesitation to grant an investigation, unless indeed he had been pronounced innocent without inquiry at all. Yet his lordship contends that Mr. Parnell must appeal to the courts or else be regarded as guilty. When was such a doctrine advanced before? Yet Lord Hartington still calls himself a Liberal, and professes to deal with Irishmen in the same spirit as with Englishmen. Would his lordship have refused such an inquiry to the leader of a large English party? Or would the House have dared to accept such counsel had it been given?

The first proceedings under the new "Crimes Bill" abundantly justified those who denounced the measure as undisguised Coercion. The whole of Ireland, with the exception of County Antrim (not including Belfast), was proclaimed without a shadow of pretext. There were no outburst of crime requiring drastic measures of suppression. It was political agitation against which this stroke was aimed. That Coercion is disliked by the English democracy

is proved by the extraordinary efforts made by Unionists to persuade themselves and others that a proclamation which places the liberties of Irishmen at the disposal of two resident magistrates, and which practically forbids associations for political purposes, is not Coercion. As to the qualification of the magistrates to whose hands the Irish people were handed over, Mr. Clifford Lloyd gives indirect but extremely valuable testimony in "a letter to *The Times*" on the Bodyke evictions. Had the scandalous proceedings at these evictions taken place in England, there would have been a shout of indignation from John O'Groat's to Land's End, before which the most powerful ministry must have succumbed. They occurred in Ireland, and so Mr. Balfour or his subordinate Col. King-Harman was allowed to give evasive replies to any questions relating to them, or to interpose the bare denials of the accused to the statements of unprejudiced witnesses from England. Bodyke may simply be a sample of a number of other districts in Ireland. Mr. Clifford Lloyd says, "It is the very place where we should have expected an exceptionally good magistrate, and we find one of whom we are told that it is impossible that he can possess any knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a magistrate or of the power with which the law invests an officer in his position in discharging them." If such a man be found in a position so responsible, how many such men may there not be scattered over various parts of Ireland? If to entrust an absolute power over the liberties of Irishmen to two men of this class be not Coercion, it is difficult to say what would be Coercion.

Such pretences, however, which could with difficulty be maintained at any time, have been swept away by the proceedings which have followed so rapidly upon one another, that we hardly got over one sensation before we found ourselves in the presence of another. The proclamation of the National League, the suppression of the meeting at Ennis, the massacre at Mitchelstown, the uncompromising defence of the conduct of the police by the Government, and the speeches of Mr. Balfour and Lord Randolph Churchill,

which, if any weight were to be attached to them, would be among the most portentous utterances that have been heard for many a day, abundantly illustrate the spirit of the Administration, and the seriousness of the conflict before us. The murder of Head Constable Whelehan was another tragic incident in the struggle. Indeed one of the first results which may be expected from Mr. Balfour's arbitrary policy is that we shall be regaled at our breakfast-tables during the coming winter with similar tales of outrage and violence. A very striking illustration of the evil spirit which is abroad, and of the false light in which the whole subject is viewed, even by some who undertake to some extent to shape public opinion, was supplied by the remark of the London correspondent of an important journal, to the effect that while the Mitchelstown massacre was a point for the Opposition, the murder of the unfortunate policeman would tell on the side of the Government. A more entire misrepresentation of the actual state of the case could not well have been given. We regard the murder of Whelehan in precisely the same light as that of the ill-fated men who fell at Mitchelstown. It would be extremely unjust to take up the cry, never very hard to raise, against the police and denounce them, as they have been denounced, as cowards and bullies. They are simply agents of an infamous policy; liable, like all other men, to gusts of passion or fits of panic; to be condemned when they exceed their powers, but not to be saddled with a responsibility that belongs to their employers. It is fair to the Government to say that in accepting the official statement as decisive, and justifying the action of the authorities at Mitchelstown, and refusing impartial inquiry, Mr. Balfour has taken his true position. On him and his colleagues, not on the police, rests the burden of that atrocity and of any others that may follow. We regard all who have fallen as alike the victims of their obstinate infatuation. Head Constable Whelehan and the three Mitchelstown men are the first fruits of "firm and resolute government." Liberals have no feeling in relation to Whelehan, except one of intense sympathy for his widow. He fell at the post of duty, and the special

service in which he met his fate was one in which the sympathy of all friends of order must be with him. If the Government meant only to put down crime, under whatever pretence committed, or by whatever specious arguments sustained, they would have unanimous and hearty support from those who will oppose them to the bitter end in their war against free speech. We hate moonlighting and boycotting as much as they do, and are more free to condemn the latter since we equally detest the milder boycotting of Tory squires and Primrose dames. What we complain of is that, in defiance of repeated warnings, the Ministry are pursuing a line of action which, by driving discontent below the surface, prepares the way for such horrible crimes as that of which Whelehan was the victim.

Our space will not allow us to dwell at present on the sweep of the doctrines of prerogative, of the right of the Government to suppress public meeting, and of the duty of submitting even to the most illegal violence on the part of the police, laid down by Mr. Balfour and Lord Randolph Churchill. When Englishmen fully understand their scope and bearing, there can be no doubt as to their verdict upon them and the men by whom they have been propagated. In the meantime it is painful to see in "Unionist" journals, and hear in the conversation in middle-class circles, how unconscious many, even of those who have called themselves Liberals, are of the nature of the crisis through which we are passing. A resolution to put down Irish agitators so dominates their mind, that they do not understand how their own liberties are being played away by the party which regards both England and Ireland as meant to be the paradise of rich people, and whose one concern is that the privileges of the landlords shall not be interfered with. *The Times* is fostering this temper with a passion for which its habitual cynicism had not prepared us. For once it seems in deadly earnest, and perhaps with Dr. Palton as its correspondent in Dublin, and Mr. Wilson in its editorial councils, it is not surprising that there should be this passionate violence in the repression of Irish Nationalism. But, even for its own purposes, it should

observe the restraints of common decency, and that it certainly does not when, speaking of Mr. O'Brien, it talks of a "scoundrel who dubs himself a politician;" when, in a bitterly vindictive spirit, it justifies the cruel discipline to which he, though untried and uncondemned, is subject; and when it taunts the Irish leaders with cowardice for not resisting the soldiery at Ennis. But its policy is all summed up in this sentence:

It must proceed to do its duty without fear or favour. Powers have been entrusted to it by Parliament which it is bound to use. The Irish people, we are convinced, will soon understand that the Government means business, and will accept the situation with that readiness which it has always shown in like circumstances.

Such policy is as mad as it is wicked. It ought not to succeed, and it will not succeed. Even the benedictions of Mr. Chamberlain will not avail to commend it to the approval of men in whom any of the salt of true Liberalism is still left. Despotism has never been without excuses, even for its most cruel and arbitrary measures. Strafford was only the champion of law and order when he was working out that idea of "thorough," which has found a feeble imitator in Mr. Balfour. Laud held that he was saving the true faith and the Catholic Church from the attacks of innovators when he thrust Puritans into the dungeons, tortured them in the pillory, pursued them even to the scaffold. There is nothing new, therefore, in the pretensions put forward by Mr. Balfour. What is new is that he is supported in this view by one who still claims to be a Radical leader. Here is a Government which is carrying on a war against freedom, not in Ireland only, but also in England, which sends its policemen to inquire as to the speakers at Radical meetings in London, in the hope that it may intimidate them, which opens the letters of an unoffending English gentleman for no other reason than because he is known to be a sympathizer with Irish Nationalism, and the "Radical Union" passes resolutions on its favour after fervid addresses from Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings. We ask in wonder what Radicalism means if, as was said by the former of these gentle-

men, this Government of reaction deserves the support of "true Radicals"?

Happily English Radicals have shown no disposition to follow this lead. Even among Unionists there must be some who in their hearts shrank back from a policy so contrary to the old principles of Liberalism. There is one at least among them who knows better. Mr. Bright has identified his name with the grand saying, "Force is no remedy." Will he not act upon it here? Just as he left the Gladstone Ministry when it ordered the fleet to act, though he had been a party to summon it to Alexandria, so now we may hope he will now shrink from the full development of the policy he has hitherto supported. To him we as Nonconformists look with most wistful regret. We are annoyed, nay, we may be indignant with him, but respect for his honoured life checks any word of censure. He is "the noblest Roman of them all," but that only deepens the sorrow with which those who have been his warmest admirers regard his present attitude. It is not his opposition to Home Rule (strange as that looks in the light of his earlier utterances) that so surprises us as his support of the party whom he has opposed throughout his life, on questions which have no relation to Ireland. John Bright voting against his true and trusty friends to prevent, for example, a discussion on religious equality, was a sight to move strong men even to tears. Our feeling is one of sorrow rather than anger. The cause of religious equality is not dependent even on John Bright, and indeed the bitter experiences of our present controversy are only emphasizing the old warning, "Put not your trust in men." Not the less do we mourn that so noble a man should be so untrue to the brightest and best memories of his life. It was a straightforward, honest attempt to advance a cause in which we should have supposed that Mr. Bright was at least as deeply interested as in the maintenance of the Union. Yet he separated himself from men like Richard and Illingworth and Dillwyn, and is patted on the back by *The Times* for doing it. We should think that such praises must be gall and wormwood to one who will ever be re-

membered as one of the most upright and conscientious of statesmen, as well as one of the truest friends of popular liberty and right. It is not too much to say that no man of purer spirit has engaged in English politics in this, or indeed, in any generation. Even those who have suffered most from his recent action are the first to confess his worth. We fear nothing will reconcile him to Home Rule, nor do we suppose he will take a foremost part in any new Liberal movement; but he can never become a Tory, and we would fain hope that he may yet be associated with some achievement worthy of his earlier days. Surely none would better answer to this description than a determined effort to stem the fierce torrent of passion against Ireland.



EDITORIAL NOTES.

MR. GOLDWIN SMITH is not to be outdone by the leader writers or correspondents of *The Times*, and has written another letter which furnishes fresh justification of the estimate of him formed by Lord Beaconsfield. If high culture can do nothing more for a man than it has done for this philosopher, and we must add for some of his class in this country, it will be long before sensible people reach the point of the young lady at Chicago, who described herself and her friends as "dizzy on culture." We do not care to engage with this self-confident gentleman as to the drift of American opinion. All we can say is that the reports which reach us are in direct contradiction to his assertion. A short time ago we met a quiet American professor, who said not a word on politics until a very indirect reference called him out. "Ah," he said, "we Americans don't understand your attitude to Mr. Gladstone. To us he is only the 'G. O. M.,' grand old man!" (ringing out the words with an emphasis and clearness which suggested the idea that he supposed they were quite new to us). "If he came to our country we would give him a reception which would astonish you."

That that gentleman represented the true American sentiment is beyond question, and Mr. Goldwin Smith will have to write a good many letters to *The Times* before he removes it. The exact tendency of American feeling is a matter of opinion; we pass into another region when Mr. Goldwin Smith writes about "doctrines of rapine, of which Mr. Gladstone is the apostle." We will not use the only language by which such a statement can be fitly described, but content ourselves with saying that the testimony of the man who wrote it is not entitled to credence on any point in which Mr. Gladstone is concerned. Over against Mr. Goldwin Smith's fierce partisan statements may be placed such a tribute as that paid by *The New York Tribune*, which certainly knows as much of American opinion as this renegade Liberal. "Americans think of him as the greatest English statesman since William Pitt, and as a statesman of genuine moral force, whose many-sided genius has been devoted to noble and useful ends. . . In their deliberate judgment, Gladstone towers in serene dignity above Englishmen of his time." As *The New York Times* says, "It is not the fault of the Philadelphians if such an invitation could not be sent to any Conservative politician in England without seeming to make him the butt of a stupid joke."

The Spectator has hitherto been honourably distinguished from other "Unionist" organs by its fairness to Mr. Gladstone personally. It has been so fiercely and blindly Unionist that it has been rapidly parting with all its Liberal principles, but even its strong Tory drift has not carried it into hatred to Mr. Gladstone; and, indeed, it has more than once rebuked the injustice done to him by others. But the epidemic has at last affected it, and, in an article on "Leaders who follow," it institutes a comparison between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright on this point of independence, insisting that the one weakness of the statesmanship of the former is "the disposition to guide his own policy by any traces he may discern of popular opinion, instead of to make popular opinion what in his own belief it ought to

be, by exerting over it the transforming influence of a great mind which trusts the instincts of the masses, but does not trust their unguided judgment." A more extraordinary misreading of facts it would not be easy to find. The remark is made *a propos* of Mr. Gladstone's much-debated article on the recent elections, which, if we may judge from the criticism it has called forth, has caused intense annoyance to the Unionist party. But to draw such a conclusion from the paper in question is the very superfluity of political naughtiness and perversity. Instead of showing any desire to find guidance for himself in the elections, Mr. Gladstone uses them to show that those who for a time had forsaken his leadership, were returning to their allegiance. The very last inference which any one can fairly draw from the paper is that, had the results of these elections been different, Mr. Gladstone would have changed his policy. It proceeds on the assumption that in its essential principles that policy is what it was, and it quotes the elections as a proof that the country is gradually coming to approve it. The great statesman is thus proving himself a true leader of men, doing the very thing which *The Spectator* says he had left undone. But it is not now for the first time that he has taken this course. What evidence was there of subserviency to public opinion in his position during the Crimean war, when his course was as independent as that of Mr. Bright himself? Or what outburst of public opinion led him to undertake the disestablishment of the Irish Church, one of the most independent and courageous acts ever done by an English statesman? It is difficult to understand the satisfaction derived from such attempts to damage a great reputation. The allegations, indeed, do not preserve a show of consistency. At one time Mr. Gladstone is reproached for autocracy, at another for following where the people lead; now for breaking up a great party by wilful determination, anon for a cowardly anxiety to anticipate the demands of public opinion, and shifting his attitude and policy in order to meet them. Both cannot be true. It is idle to argue that he sought the favour of Ireland. Ireland does not rule the British Empire, and he must be infatuated indeed

if, thirsting for popular support, he defied unpopularity in England in order to win it in Ireland. Why should not even politicians try and be just. Let them condemn the Home Rule policy if they will, but they will do it all the more effectually if they recognize that the mistake which they attribute to Mr. Gladstone was that of a noble and patriotic statesman, who believed the measure to be right, and was willing to sacrifice power and imperil popularity and reputation in order to carry it.

The British Weekly has rendered a real service to the cause of true godliness by calling attention to the Keswick Convention. The movement is a remarkable one. Originating in a modest and unpretending way, by the invitation of the late Canon Battersby to a number of like-minded friends to unite in a series of special services, it has become an institution of considerable magnitude. We happened ourselves to be in Keswick last year on the closing days of the gathering, and had an opportunity of learning something of its character and effects; and while dissenting from much of the teaching, could not but recognize the intense earnestness of those who had congregated in such numbers in the hope of having their spiritual life deepened. The assembly itself was a remarkable phenomenon in an age like ours; but while feeling this to the fullest extent, we were quite alive to the objections which might fairly be urged against the whole movement. These are stated with remarkable lucidity and force by the writer in *The British Weekly*, and his strictures are all the more effective because they are penned in a sympathetic temper by one who is prepared to concede quite as much as can fairly be claimed on its behalf. His criticisms have been challenged by the Rev. J. B. Figgis and Rev. H. Webb Peploe, but they have not been weakened in their material point. This seems to us very fairly stated in the following paragraph:

It is well known, the central position of the Pearsall-Smith system is that just as the unsaved need to be instantaneously regenerated, so to

the saved, after their conversion, there is possible another change, as sudden and influential, by which they are lifted as far above the level reached by simple conversion as the converted are above the unregenerate; and in both cases the transition takes place through a single act of faith. This change is the object of the Convention. It is spoken of under a multitude of names, the commonest being, "the blessing;" indeed, so well is it known as the absorbing topic that it is often simply called "it." People ask one another, Have you got "it"? Other names for it are Second Conversion, the Second Blessing, the Rest of Faith, the Surrender of Self, the Exchange of Wills with Christ and so on. The Convention, indeed, has a vocabulary of its own; you constantly hear such phrases as "stepping out on the Word," "take me, break me, make me," "the Christ-life," "the Spirit-life," and these phrases of the language of Canaan—say rather, perhaps, the *patois* of Canaan—excite the fervour of the initiated.

The bare statement is enough to indicate the wide divergence from the old Evangelical teaching. Taken as it stands it is, in our judgment, as contrary to Scripture as to the ordinary experience of Christian men. But the eagerness with which the idea is taken up shows how earnestly numbers are longing for a higher religious life, and suggests that in the teaching there is a germ of truth. To separate the wheat from the chaff, and so to minister to the devout longings of earnest Christian hearts, should be the aim of all who desire the real quickening of the churches. Even the extreme and objectionable form in which the idea is presented is a protest against the tendency to make light of the Divine life in the soul and to get rid of the supernatural.

The report of Mr. Bridge on the Tithe Riots in Wales does not contain much that can be comforting to the hearts of Churchmen. It practically admits that Welsh farmers have a substantial grievance, and have not, as is continually suggested, fallen a prey to mischievous agitators, and that the charges made against them had for its most part broken down. Mr. Bridge shows, however, how thoroughly he has failed to comprehend the real difficulty when he suggests that it may be settled by transferring the payment to the landlord. The grievance is twofold. It is that of the

farmer who complains, and complains justly that the payment has never been adjusted to the changed conditions of agricultural life. It is that of the Welshman Nonconformist who objects to a payment for what he regards as an "alien church." Neither of them is touched by Mr. Bridge's proposals. The tenant will pay all the same when the landlord is the collector instead of the clergyman.

DENOMINATIONAL NOTES.

In the August number I ventured to say that I had read the resolution of the Lancashire College Committee with "blank amazement." I did not attempt to criticize a policy the reasons for which were not before the world. I expressed only my extreme astonishment. The Secretary of the Committee, writing in *The British Weekly*, suggests that I must have written hyperbolically, and for the time, have sunk the philosopher in the rhetorician. He thinks I should have known old friends and colleagues better. But it was precisely because I did know them so well that I was so surprised. I was so well assured of their wisdom, of their loyalty to great principles, of their desire to do right, and of their devotion to the interests of the college, that I could not understand how they could have reached the conclusion expressed in the resolution. I do not understand it now, and so I adhere to my former expression. Let me indicate its exact force. If the intention was to terminate the connection of the three professors with the college, that would be to me a matter of surprise, especially remembering that among them is one so universally honoured as Dr. Alexander Thomson. If, on the contrary, the object was to set the hands of the Committee free in order that they might make changes in the working of the college they consider expedient, then there was a reason for equal surprise in the fact that the same suggestion was not made to all the professors. I may add

that the communications I received from Lancashire so satisfied me that this was the feeling of a large section of the constituency that I could not but wonder how the Committee could be so far out of touch with what I knew to be a widespread sentiment. It would be impertinent to say any more on the subject at present. Had I known that the resolution was intended to be confidential I would not have referred to it at all. At the same time, it is very difficult to see how such a communication could possibly be regarded as confidential after it had passed into the hands of the Professors. If a board of deacons passed a resolution asking their pastor to place his resignation in their hands and forwarded it to him it would surely be for him to determine whether it should be treated as confidential. Does not the same law apply here? I deprecate very strongly the practice of dragging into public discussion the proceedings of public bodies before they are ripe for criticism. Of course the Committee of a great institution like the Lancashire College cannot expect that their policy will escape the common fate. But they have a right to demand that outsiders, instead of attempting to guide or influence them, shall wait to know what they propose and their reasons for it before passing judgment. I should withdraw, therefore, even an expression of amazement if that was to be understood as being an adverse criticism. Lancashire College is one of our noblest foundations. No one who loves Congregationalism, and certainly no one who loves the college as I do, would say a word that could injure it. But this very attachment makes us zealous for its reputation and anxious to preserve and extend its influence. Whatever difference of view there may be as to particular questions in the management, we have all a common object to which everything else should be subordinated. Hasty expressions of opinion would be alien to this spirit, and inconsistent with that confidence to which the Committee are certainly entitled.

The new controversy about Milton Mount is singularly unfortunate. Milton Mount is one of the most valuable institutions connected with the denomination, and any injury inflicted upon it would be a serious loss to our ministry. Now as discussions in newspapers cannot fail to injure the institution it might be hoped that even those who suppose they have a grievance would pause before they published it to the world. Would it be too much even to hope that they might be content to suffer a little rather than imperil the interests of a college which has been an unspeakable blessing to numbers? After all there are many ways in which ministers can make their influence felt without appealing to the public through the press. On the case of Miss Tarrant we can only say that it seems to us specially unsuited for this kind of discussion. A lady principal must have very large discretion in matters of discipline. Indeed, no competent person would hold the position if she were required to defend her acts in the newspaper. On the other hand, it is clear that this discretion will never be granted where there is not full confidence. That this does not exist in relation to Milton Mount to the extent which is desired is evident from the letters which have appeared. We hope, however, that the committee will be able to make explanations which will remove this uneasy feeling. We should greatly regret to see another committee of inquiry, but it would be better to resort to that rather than allow the present dissatisfaction, however limited in extent, to continue.

Lancashire has recently lost two well-known and efficient ministers. Rev. Robert Best has spent his whole ministerial life, extending to forty years, in the county, first at Kirkham and afterwards at Bolton. Wherever known he was respected and loved. Rev. James Williamson has been cut off in the midst of his days by a painful disease which only served to call forth the heroism of his Christian character. Dr. Mackennal, from whom we first heard of

his illness and of the Christian courage with which he had heard the opinion of the doctors, writes thus :

It was in July, or early in August, 1885, that he felt something form in his leg—I think the left thigh—while he was in Switzerland. When he came home he consulted his doctor, who told him he had probably ruptured a small vessel, and that the slight swelling was due to a clot of blood which he might expect to find soon absorbed.

All through the next year the swelling became more and more prominent ; it was accompanied with pain, and it must have been worse than he allowed himself to say it was, for when, last September, I saw him at the college, he was thin and his face was pale and anxious. By that time the doctor had affirmed that it was sarcoma. But sarcoma only means fleshy tumour, and it remained to be seen whether the tumour was malignant or innoxious.

Very rapidly after this he came to know the gravity of the case. I saw him next in the middle of January, and meanwhile all these things had happened. The tumour had been pronounced of so grave a character that the leg must come off. Jones, of the Manchester Infirmary, called on a Wednesday to make arrangements for the operation on the Friday following, and in course of conversation it transpired that the amputation would probably only give him a little lengthening of life—only two years. Both Williamson and Jones agreed that, if that were so, it would be better not to undergo the operation. He was recommended to go to Bournemouth for part of the winter, and on his way he called on Sir Joseph Lister and Sir James Paget. These eminent surgeons could give no definite opinion because the leg had not been probed, and they could not tell the state of the tissue. Here, too, it was evident how Williamson kept his thoughts, or at least his words, fixed on the more hopeful side of things. He told me that Lister had pronounced his constitution good, and that Paget had said that the tumour might, after all, be only a very small affair ; but, nevertheless, he actually regarded himself as given up by the doctors and at liberty to resort to any one.

I next saw him in June, I think, when he told me that he had seen his woman-doctor, who confessed the case to be beyond her. He was then following Count Mattei's treatment, which also was doing him good. These medicines did really alleviate the pain and helped to keep him going.

I saw and heard nothing more until the announcement of his death, and as I was in Wales at the time I got no particulars. I have only heard a very little since. He was preaching latterly once every other Sunday, always doing more than his people wanted him to do. The last time he preached was on the communion Sunday in August. I am told he broke down at the table, and had to be assisted. He was fully intending to preach on Sunday the 28th. He had his subject in

view, and spoke as if confident that this sermon would be particularly helpful. On Tuesday, the 23rd, he said to his wife he was sure that the tumour was improving, he could feel that it was softer. In the afternoon he simply died in his chair. The cause of death was certified as syncope. I think the effort he made to bear up, the work he did to the last, and the strain of all upon him conspired with the tumour to wear him out.

He died at the post of duty, faithful to the trust he had undertaken, and giving in his life abundant evidence of the strengthening power of the gospel he preached. The last few months were a period of intense suffering and of patient endurance. The following is a note from a member of his church :

Though his friends could not but see that he was failing fast, Mr. Williamson never seemed to quite lose help himself, but kept up his cheerful courage to the end. He preached once a day till two Sundays before his death. On the first Mr. John Williamson, who was on a visit to his brother, preached for him, for the second he reluctantly allowed a supply to be found. At the same time, he agreed not to preach the following Sunday, but insisted that he should be quite able to take the evening service the Sunday after and administer the communion. And he spoke several times of a "beautiful sermon" he had in his mind.

On the morning of the day he died a doctor who happened to call found him suffering from severe exhaustion, but he gradually recovered, and there seemed no immediate danger. In the afternoon he took tea with Mrs. Williamson in quite his usual spirits, and said how much he enjoyed it. He then lay down on a couch in the room, and Mrs. Williamson read to him till he closed his eyes as if sleeping. And he never roused again. You will probably have heard that so far from his mind growing weak with illness as his strength failed his mind seemed to grow more eager and active.

So has passed away from us a man whose life was full of promise, yet even in his days of pain and sorrow he so witnessed for Christ that the Master was glorified in his affliction. He was an able preacher and a faithful pastor, who had done good work and might have hoped to do still more. It was his severe trial which revealed the full strength of his faith in Christ.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

Kohleth. An Exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes. By T. C. FINLAYSON, M.A. (T. Fisher Unwin.) The "coming battle," we are told by omniscient journalism, will be over the Old Testament, and we are further assured on the same authority, that not only do the people fail to appreciate the seriousness of the situation, but that many of their teachers, indeed, we should think a great majority of them, are in the same position, since, "except among the Unitarians, who boast some admirable Hebrew scholars, a profound ignorance of the whole subject prevails in this country." We do not underrate the importance of this view of the situation because we dissent from it in some important matters. We strongly deprecate the introduction of the militant element into the forecast. There can be no doubt that we shall have discussion on the questions which critics are continually raising, but it should be discussion with a single eye to the discovery of truth, not to the achieving of a controversial victory. Then we do not think that the ignorance or the indifference of English teachers is so great as is assumed. We speak from knowledge when we say that the subject is one which is causing a good deal of anxious thought to numbers of our ministers, who are fully alive to the difficulties of the situation, and who on that very account are slow to speak. But especially do we feel that the most vital questions at issue are such as cannot be settled by mere Hebrew experts, and, indeed, such as they cannot settle at all. Their province is to instruct as to the age of the documents, the genuineness of the text, perhaps the interpretation. But all this is only to supply materials for the consideration of the all-important question as to the exact position of the Old Testament and its bearing on the theory of inspiration. These are points on which men who know nothing of the Hebrew language or literature will claim to have an opinion.

Entertaining a strong feeling on this point, we feel that any writer who helps us better to appreciate the infinite wisdom and truth contained in the Old Testament is doing a very timely, valuable service. Whatever Hebraists may say as to the age and authorship of a particular book of the Old Testament, they cannot destroy the intrinsic value of the teaching. We therefore very heartily congratulate Mr. Finlayson on the solid work which he has done in this exposition of a book which, with all its obscurity, and perhaps partly because of its obscurity, has always had great attractions for devout students of Scripture. Mr. Finlayson makes no parade of learning, does not strive after ingenious and novel interpretations, seeks to be only a simple and honest expositor of the book. We are greatly interested in the quiet unpretending manner in which he follows out his own line of thought and the lucidity with which he presents his views to his readers. Everywhere we have evidences of his extensive reading. He has made himself familiar

with the literature of the book which has received many important additions of late years, and has known how to profit by the labours of other scholars while taking his own independent position. His desire has evidently been to get at the mind of the writer, and he has not been hindered in this by any preconceived theories which he felt himself bound to maintain at all costs. He may or may not be right in his fundamental conception of the design of the book, but he has at least a distinct idea present to his own mind, and the exposition which is based upon it is consistent and coherent throughout.

The volume consists of discourses addressed to Mr. Finlayson's own congregation, and looked at in this character they deserve very high praise. If preachers would treat the different books of Scripture more in this style, expository preaching would be redeemed from the reproach which at present rests upon it, and the people being better instructed in the Word of God would be less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine. What is of equal, if not even higher importance, we might be freed from the wretched tendency which, almost more than any other, has led to false, because one-sided and imperfect, views of the Word of God—of accepting doctrines on the strength of isolated passages, or even sentences, instead of seeking to gather the real thought of the sacred writers from a careful study of their entire teaching. We venture to say that the preacher who shall endeavour honestly and faithfully to do this will not be without appreciation. It must be remembered, however, that this will necessitate work, but it is a kind of work in which both preacher and hearer will find profit and pleasure. Expositions are dreaded or disliked because they are too often attempts to compensate for idleness in the study by diffuseness in the pulpit. The preacher does not give himself time to work out a subject, and he hopes to hide his neglect by taking a large section of Scripture on which he can make some general remark. The purely scholastic exposition is equally unacceptable because dull and wearisome. We knew a minister who gave a series of what he called his "Logos sermons," by which he succeeded in emptying his chapel. "I am not surprised," he said at the close, "that these sermons have not been popular. They required too much attention and thought for them to be appreciated at first. I shall deliver them a second time." It is not surprising that this gentleman found his home in the Established Church. He was an extreme example of a class, happily not a large one on this side the Tweed, of pedantic expositors. It is pleasant to turn from those who have brought into disrepute one of the most necessary parts of ministerial service to such a master-workman as Mr. Finlayson. Seldom, if ever, has the practical wisdom of Ecclesiastes been so ably presented. A remarkable skill in putting abstract truths in a concrete form, a singular felicity in dealing with the things of common life and daily duty, aptness of illustration, and frequent beauty of poetic thought, all combine to give these discourses great attractiveness. But we value

even more than any of these qualities, rare as they be, the success which Mr. Finlayson has achieved in making the book not only intelligible, but eminently instructive.

Our author truly say in his preface that it is "a book which at once attacks and repels the ordinary Christian readers," but by his admirable mode of treatment he has succeeded in giving prominence to the attractive elements. "The conclusion of the book," he tells us, "'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,' seems to furnish us after all with such a clear and simple clue to main purpose of the writer as to justify the belief that whatever difficulties of interpretation the book may present its ultimate aim is to foster the life of godliness and virtue." The writer gives us the story of his experiments in life, and the miserable failure which had attended them all, thus leading up to the conclusion, which he expresses in the closing chapter. Mr. Finlayson refuses to regard the book as a systematic treatise or as a dialogue between two disputants, and he follows the example of Dean Bradley, whom he commends for "the faithfulness with which he resists what he calls the 'clerical' temptation to make Ecclesiastes speak as a Christian for purposes of edification." In his judgment, both the Dean and Professor Cheyne take too sombre a view of the book, and he holds that if the latter were to be accepted it would be hard to vindicate its retention in the canon of Scripture. His admirable remarks on the title indicate the spirit in which he has approached the subject, and furnish some clue to his mode of treatment.

"This Greek word 'Ecclesiastes' was chosen as an equivalent for 'Koheleth,' the Hebrew title of the book. 'Koheleth' is the name by which, throughout the book, the writer designates himself. The word is uniformly translated 'Preacher' in our version; but whether it can possibly bear this meaning seems to be doubtful. The Hebrew word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and seems to have been coined by the writer himself. Some scholars, looking at its derivation, maintain that it must mean either 'one who gathers an assembly,' or 'one who is member of an assembly.' If the latter be the meaning, then the word 'Ecclesiastes' is an exact equivalent; for it appears that this Greek word was not commonly used in the sense of one who calls an assembly together, or of one who preaches to an assembly, but rather of one who was simply a member of an assembly and took part in its deliberations and debates. Indeed it has been suggested that 'Debater' rather than 'Preacher' would be the true English equivalent of the Greek 'Ecclesiastes' and the Hebrew 'Koheleth.' And it has been suggested also that the reason why the writer deliberately coined the Hebrew word was just that he might present himself, not as a preacher or prophet who was prepared to give definite or authoritative deliverances on the problems of life and destiny, but rather as one member of an assembly, whose per-

sonal experience qualified him, in a special manner, for discussing such subjects, and who had often debated them both with himself and with others. It must, I think, be acknowledged that this interpretation of the title of the book agrees well with the character of its contents. But, inasmuch as the meaning of the word 'Kohleth' seems still to be doubtful, I prefer simply to use it—or rather its more familiar Greek equivalent—as a kind of proper name or *non de plume*. I will therefore constantly speak of the author of the book as 'Ecclesiastes.' "

We have here the key-note to the entire discourses. The idea is worked out with great ability and care, and the statements and reasonings of Kohleth harmonizes very easily and naturally with this general outline. It is impossible to follow the author through the very suggestive exposition in which he makes a book which has too often been dismissed as an insoluble enigma a message of living truth, as necessary to-day as when it was first written. There is no attempt to import into the Preacher's words ideas of a later age and a fuller revelation which could not have been present to his mind. Mr. Finlayson has done much better service, and certainly has shown truer reverence for the teachings of Scripture, by giving a faithful interpretation of the old record, and then pointing out how all its lessons are presented in more perfect form and enforced with higher sanctions under the New Testament. Controverted questions as to the age and authorship of "Ecclesiastes," are touched very lightly. The aim is rather to show that whenever and by whomsoever written, it so deals with the great problems of human life in such a spirit and with such true wisdom as vindicates its right to the place it holds in the canonical Scriptures.

Victorian Hymns—English Sacred Songs of Fifty Years. (Kegan Paul, Trench and Co.) The idea of this book was happily conceived, and it has been well executed. The volume itself is a sufficient proof that this half-century has been marked by a somewhat remarkable outburst of sacred song. The Evangelical Revival had its own sacred poets and hymn-writers, and it would have been strange if the "Catholic" movement had not provided them with some successors. Keble, Newman, and Faber (both in his Anglican and Romish days) are conspicuous amongst them, but the Evangelical party, on its side, has not been without its representatives, Miss Havergal being probably the one who has taken the strongest hold of the religious mind of the country. Her popularity has been extraordinary, and is well justified by some of her productions which have passed into the hymnology of the Universal Church. Among Nonconformists Dr. Bonar deservedly holds a very high place. He has written a great deal, and as a matter of course, therefore, some of his poems, however beautiful in sentiment do not take high rank as poems, but his more exquisite hymns, such as "I heard the voice of Jesus say," cannot easily be matched.

We may safely predict for them not only popularity, but that highest kind of popularity, which belongs only to favourite songs which have become as household words. As Congregationalists we point with commendable satisfaction to Mr. George Rawson who has not written very much, but some of whose productions are real gems both of poesy and piety. To our mind there are few more perfect hymns for its purpose than the sacramental one "By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored," &c. Mr. Lynch's name recalls the memory of an unhappy controversy, which ought never to have risen, and whose incidents and results should serve as a perpetual warning to those who would engage in the ungenial task of convicting men who have any independence of mind, of constructive heresy. Already the verdict of time has reversed or modified the hasty judgment of the day. The "Rivulet" as a whole has not taken the high place which the fervid admirers of its author predicted for it; but, on the other hand, several of its hymns have received the recognition to which they were unquestionably entitled. All these writers and a number of others are represented in the volume. Of course it is only a selection from the rich treasures of the half-century, but it has been made with considerable judgment though not wholly free from some personal or ecclesiastical influences. Like all such selections, it will be open to the opposite complaints of those who desiderate some that have been omitted and others who take exception to some which are inserted. It is almost impossible that it should be otherwise. In arrest of any hasty judgment, however, we would put in the reminder that this is a book of sacred poetry and not a hymn-book for congregational use, and also that from its very nature it was meant to be catholic and must be representative of different schools of thought. It is by this consideration we suppose that the insertion of the following hymn of Faber's is to be explained:

Blood is the price of heaven;
 All sin that price exceeds;
 O come to be forgiven,
 He bleeds,
 My Saviour bleeds!
 Bleeds!
 Under the olive boughs,
 Falling like ruby beads,
 The blood drops from His brows,
 He bleeds,
 My Saviour bleeds!
 Bleeds!
 While the fierce scourges fall,
 The precious blood still pleads;
 In front of Pilate's hall,
 He bleeds,
 My Saviour bleeds!
 Bleeds!

A more painful and not to say offensive representation of the Scripture doctrine that the "Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin" could not well be conceived, and we confess we do not see a redeeming quality in the poetry which should have secured this hymn a place here. We can only add that the publisher has done his part of the work with admirable taste. It is really an *édition de luxe*, and while, as we have said, objections might reasonably be taken to some of these sacred songs, the collection as a whole does credit to its handsome getting-up.

Red Spider. By the Author of "John Herring." Two vols. (Chatto and Windus.) "John Herring" was a very powerful novel, but it was not a pleasant one, and in both respects it was very like its predecessor "Mehalah." That tale of the salt marshes, in which the author first revealed his genius to the world, was one of the most thrilling tales which has appeared for many a day, but it was extremely disagreeable. As it was with these first efforts, so has it been with the subsequent ones; "Red Spider" is no exception to the rule. There is a weird-like fascination about it which it is not easy to resist, but there is much that is repellent rather than attractive. The scene is laid in Burton Clovelly, a village in North Devon, where the reign of primitive simplicity has not yet been disturbed. The pictures of rustic life and character are extremely well done, and there is an air of realism about the story which speaks much for the author's artistic skill. But the atmosphere of the place and its society is depressing. For anything that appears to the contrary here, the people might be a set of baptized pagans. We are introduced indeed to the vicar, who was so anxious to stand well with all his parishioners, that he had trained himself never to express, if indeed he ever formed, an independent opinion, and whose ludicrous perplexities in consequence of this determination not to be in antagonism to any one are among the cleverest hits in the story. We have also two churchwardens who are brothers-in-law, and whose quarrel was the cause of the vicar's perplexity as well as the occasion of the story. But we seek in vain for any trace of Christian sentiment or principle in either of these worthies. What is worse, we find ourselves in a region where the strangest and most irrational superstition prevails. The characters which interest us most are Honor and Kate, the daughters of an old carrier, and the lover of the former, a young man in whom the struggle between the good and evil of his nature is long and keen, and is depicted with remarkable power. But even the heroine Honor, who in many respects is a fine and noble character, and who attends to all the outward duties of religion, does not give any evidence of religious principle. What there is in her of nobility, and there is much, is due to the memory of her mother and the solemn promise she has made to her. The whole story of the trial through which she had to pass is extremely repulsive, and is

made still more so by the manner in which it is told. It is too much the habit of novelists so to represent the kind of sacrifice through which she had to pass as to make it appear landable. Judged by high principles it would, had it been consummated, have simply been odious and detestable and instead of clothing it with a halo of romance its real nature should have been exposed. Despite this the book is powerful and interesting.

A Choice of Chance. By WILLIAM DODSON. Two vols. (T. Fisher Unwin.) If this book were to be judged simply as a novel, it might very well pass muster. Though it might not attain a very high place, yet it is superior both in the structure of its plot and the portraiture of character, to a large proportion of the novels which crowd Mr. Mudie's catalogue. The book is, at all events, interesting throughout, and that is no small merit. The great difficulty is to understand how the various actors in the drama could possibly have behaved themselves as they did. We know not whether to wonder most at the superiority of the little family group into which the heroine had been introduced to a prejudice so common, and supposed to be so respectable as to be almost a virtue, or to the extraordinary story of the distinguished statesman who is one of the *dramatis personæ*. But the objection is one which may be taken to most works of the kind. It is very seldom that the actors in a story behave as people do in ordinary life. Waiving this point, the story is sufficiently exciting, and some of its characters and scenes are very cleverly done. But it is meant to be more than a work of amusement. The title is very obscure, and, indeed, ambiguous, but it suggests as much as this. The problem which the story is intended to elucidate is the extent to which man is a creature of circumstances. The heroine is troubled by a doubt how far her choice of a virtuous life had been the result of chance. We cannot say that much light is thrown on this perplexed question, but, such as there is, it serves to show that while a man must be affected by his environment, it is a great fallacy to suppose that environment is everything. Out of miserable surroundings came one of the finest characters in the book.

Bible Warnings. Addresses to Children. By Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D. (J. Nisbet and Co.) Dr. Newton evidently has a rare faculty for addressing children so as to interest and instruct them at the same time. The present volume is an admirable illustration of his power in this respect. The addresses are short, simple, and striking. They are based upon familiar warnings of Scripture, and are enriched and lighted up with copious anecdotes and illustrations suited to the tastes and capacity of children. The writer talks to his youthful audience in a way well fitted, not only to reach their understandings, but also to win their affections.

